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ESSAYS.

On the nature and immutability of TRUTH, in oppoſition to Sophiſtry and Scepticiſm.

On POETRY and MUSIC, as they affect the Mind.

On LAUGHTER, and LUDICROUS COMPOSITION.

On the Utility of CLASSICAL LEARNING.

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AN ESSAY ON POETRY AND MUSIC, AS THEY AFFECT THE MIND.

THE following Eſſays, (which were read in a private literary ſociety many years ago), having been ſeen and approved of by ſome learned perſons in England, are now publiſhed at their deſire. In writing them out for the preſs, conſiderable amendments were made, and new obſervations added; and hence one or two ſlight anachroniſms have ariſen, which, as they affect not the ſenſe, it was not thought neceſſary to guard againſt.

AN

ESSAY

ON

POETRY

AND

MUSIC,

AS THEY AFFECT THE MIND.

Written in the year 1762.

THE rules of every uſeful art may be divided into two kinds. Some are neceſſary to the accompliſhment of the end propoſed by the artiſt, and are therefore denominated Eſſential Rules; while others, called Ornametal or Mechanical, have no better foundation than the practice of ſome great performer, whom it has become the faſhion to imitate. The latter are to be learned from the communications of the artiſt, or by obſerving his

work: the former may be inveſtigated upon the principles of reaſon and philoſophy.

Theſe two claſſes of rules, however different, have often been confounded by critical writers, without any material injury to art, or any great inconvenience, either to the artiſt or to his diſciple. For frequently it happens, that faſhion and philoſophy coincide; and that an artiſt gives the law in his profeſſion, whoſe principles are as juſt as his performance is excellent. Such has been the fate of POETRY in particular. Homer, whom we conſider as the founder of this art, becauſe we have none more ancient to refer to, appears, in the ſtructure of his two poems, to have proceeded upon a view of things equally comprehenſive and rational: nor had Ariſtotle, in laying down the philoſophy of the art, any thing more to do, than to trace out the principles of his contrivance. What the great critic has left on this ſubject, proves Homer to have been no leſs admirable as a philoſopher than as a poet; poſſeſſed not only of unbounded imagination, and all the powers of language, but alſo of a moſt exact judgement, which could at once propoſe a noble end, and deviſe the very beſt means of attaining it.

An art, thus founded on reaſon, could not fail to be durable. The propriety of the Homeric mode of invention has been acknowledged by the learned in all ages; every real improvement which particular branches

es of the art may have received ſince his time, has been conducted upon his principles; and poets, who never heard of his name, have, merely by their own good ſenſe, been prompted to tread the path, which he, guided by the ſame internal monitor, had trod before them. And hence, notwithſtanding its apparent licentiouſneſs, true Poetry is a thing perfectly rational and regular; and nothing can be more ſtrictly philoſophical, than that part of criticiſm may and ought to be, which unfolds the general characters that diſtinguiſh it from other kinds of compoſition.

Whether the following diſcourſe will in any degree juſtify this laſt remark, is ſubmitted to the reader. It aſpires to little other praiſe, than that of plain language and familiar illuſtration; diſclaiming all paradoxical opinions and refined theories, which are indeed ſhowy in the appearance, and not of difficult invention, but have no tendency to diffuſe knowledge, or enlighten the human mind; and which, in matters of taſte that have been canvaſſed by mankind theſe two thouſand years, would ſeem to be peculiarly incongruous.

The train of thought that led me into this inquiry was ſuggeſted by a converſation many years ago, in which I had taken the freedom to offer an opinion different from what was maintained by the company, but warranted, as I then thought, and ſtill think,

by

by the greateſt authorities and the beſt reaſons. It was pleaded againſt me, that taſte is capricious, and criticiſm variable; and that the rules of Ariſtotle's Poetics, being founded in the practice of Sophocles and Homer, ought not to be applied to the poems of other ages and nations. I admitted the plea, as far as theſe rules are local and temporary; but aſſerted, that many of them, being founded in nature, were indiſpenſable, and could not be violated without ſuch impropriety, as, though overlooked by ſome, would always be offenſive to the greater part of readers, and obſtruct the general end of poetical compoſition: and that it would be no leſs abſurd, for a poet to violate the *eſſential* rules of his art, and juſtify himſelf by an appeal from the tribunal of Ariſtotle, than for a mechanic to conſtruct an engine on principles inconſiſtent with the laws of motion, and excuſe himſelf by diſclaiming the authority of Sir Iſaac Newton.

The characters that diſtinguiſh poetry from other works of literature, belong either to the SUBJECT, or to the LANGUAGE: ſo that this diſcourſe naturally reſolves itſelf into two parts.—— What we have to ſay on Muſic will be found to belong to the firſt.

PART

PART I.

POETRY CONSIDERED WITH RESPECT TO ITS MATTER OR SUBJECT.

WHEN we affirm, that every art or contrivance which has a meaning muſt have an end, we only repeat an identical propoſition: and when we ſay, that the eſſential or indiſpenſable rules of an art are thoſe that direct to the accompliſhment of the end propoſed by the artiſt, we repeat a definition whereof it would be captious to controvert the propriety. And therefore, before we can determine any thing in regard to the eſſential rules of this art, we muſt form an idea of its END or DESTINATION.

CHAP-

CHAPTER I.

Of the end of Poetical Compoſition.

THAT one end of Poetry, in its firſt inſtitution, and in every period of its progreſs, muſt have been, TO GIVE PLEASURE, will hardly admit of any doubt. If men firſt employed it to expreſs their adoration of ſuperior and inviſible beings, their gratitude to the benefactors of mankind, their admiration of moral, intellectual, or corporeal excellence, or, in general, their love of what was agreeable in their own ſpecies, or in other parts of Nature; they muſt be ſuppoſed to have endeavoured to make their poetry *pleaſing*; becauſe, otherwiſe, it would have been unſuitable to the occaſion that gave it birth, and to the ſentiments it was intended to enliven. Or if, with Horace, we were to believe, that it was firſt uſed as a vehicle to convey into ſavage minds the principles of government and civility *; ſtill we

* The honour of civilizing mankind, is by the poets aſcribed to poetry, (*Hor. Ar. Poet. verſ.* 391.); — by the orator, to oratory, (*Cicero, de Orat. lib.* 1. § 33.); — and by others to philoſophy, (*Cicero, de Orat. lib.* 1. § 36.

we muſt allow, that one chief thing attended to in its compoſition muſt have been, to give it charms ſufficient to engage the ear and captivate the heart of an unthinking audience. In latter times, the true poet, though in chuſing materials he never loſt ſight of utility, yet in giving them form, (and it is the *form* chiefly that diſtinguiſhes poetry from other writings), has always made the entertainment of mankind his principal concern. Indeed, we cannot conceive, that, independently on this conſideration, men would ever have applied themſelves to arts ſo little neceſſary to life, and withal ſo difficult, as muſic, painting, and poetry. Certain it is, that a poem, containing the moſt important truths, would meet with a cold reception, if deſtitute of thoſe graces of ſound, invention, and language, whereof the ſole end and aim is, to give pleaſure.

But is it not the end of this art, *to inſtruct*, as well as *to pleaſe?* Verſes, that give pleaſure only, without profit, — what are they but chiming trifles? And if a poem were to pleaſe, and at the ſame time, inſtead of improving, to corrupt the mind, would it not deſerve to be conſidered as a poiſon ren-

§ 36. 37.; and *Tuſc. Queſt. lib.* 5. § 5.). —— It is probably a gradual thing, the effect of many co-operating cauſes; and proceeding rather from favourable accidents, or the ſpecial appointment of Heaven, than from the art and contrivance of men.

dered doubly dangerous and deteſtable by its alluring qualities?—All this is true: and yet pleaſure is undoubtedly the immediate aim of all thoſe artifices by which poetry is diſtinguiſhed from other compoſitions,—of the harmony, the rhythm, the ornamented language, the compact and diverſified fable: for I believe it will be allowed, that a plain treatiſe, deſtitute of all theſe beauties, might be made to convey more inſtruction than any poem in the world. As writing is more excellent than painting, and ſpeech than muſic, on account of its ſuperior uſefulneſs; ſo a diſcourſe, containing profitable information even in a rude ſtyle, may be more excellent, becauſe more uſeful, than any thing in Homer or Virgil: but ſuch a diſcourſe partakes no more of the nature of poetry, than language does of melody, or a manuſcript of a picture; whereas an agreeable piece of writing may be poetical, though it yield little or no inſtruction. To inſtruct, is an end common to all good writing, to all poetry, all hiſtory, all ſound philoſophy. But of theſe laſt the principal end is to inſtruct; and if this ſingle end be accompliſhed, the philoſopher and the hiſtorian will be allowed to have acquitted themſelves well: but the poet muſt do a great deal for the ſake of pleaſure only; and if he fail to pleaſe, he may indeed deſerve praiſe on other accounts, but as a poet he has done nothing.——But do not hiſtorians and philoſophers, as well as poets,

poets, make it their ſtudy to pleaſe their readers? They generally do: but the former pleaſe, that they may inſtruct; the latter inſtruct, that they may the more effectually pleaſe. Pleaſing, though uninſtructive, poetry may gratify a light mind; and what tends even to corrupt the heart may gratify profligates: but the true poet addreſſes his work, not to the giddy, nor to the worthleſs, nor to any party, but to mankind; and, if he means to pleaſe the *general* taſte, muſt often employ inſtruction as one of the arts that miniſter to this kind of pleaſure.

The neceſſity of this ariſes from a circumſtance in human nature, which is to man (as Eraſmus in Pope's opinion was to the prieſthood) "at once his glory and his ſhame;" namely, that the human mind, unleſs when debaſed by paſſion or prejudice, never fails to take the ſide of truth and virtue: — a ſad reflection, when it leads us to conſider the debaſing influence of paſſion and prejudice; but a moſt comfortable one, when it directs our view to the original dignity and rectitude of the human ſoul. To favour virtue, and ſpeak truth, and take pleaſure in thoſe who do ſo, is natural to man; to act otherwiſe, requires an effort, does violence to nature, and always implies ſome evil purpoſe in the agent. The firſt, like progreſſive motion, is eaſy and graceful; the laſt is unſeemly and difficult, like walking ſide-ways, or backwards. The one is

ſo common, that it is little attended to, and when it becomes the object of attention, is always conſidered as an energy ſuitable to moral and rational nature: the other has a ſtrangeneſs in it, that provokes at once our ſurpriſe and diſapprobation. And hence the virtuous character of the ancient chorus * was reconcileable, not only to probability, but to real matter of fact.——The dramatic poets of Greece rightly judged, that great perſons, like thoſe who appear in tragedy, engaged in any great action, are never without attendants or ſpectators, or thoſe at leaſt who obſerve their conduct, and make remarks upon it. And therefore, together with the perſons principally concerned, they always introduced attendants or ſpectators

* Actoris partes chorus, officiumque virile
Defendat ———
Ille bonis faveatque, et conſilietur amice,
Et regat iratos, et amet pacare tumentes;
Ille dapes laudet menſæ brevis; ille ſalubrem
Juſtitiam, legeſque, et apertis otia portis;
Ille tegat commiſſa, Deoſque precetur, et oret,
Ut redeat miſeris, abeat fortuna ſuperbis.
Hor. Ar. Poet. verſ. 195.

"Let the chorus, like the player, ſupport a character, and let it act a manly part. Let it favour the good, and give friendly counſel, and reſtrain the angry, and love to compoſe the ſwellings of paſſion. Let it celebrate the praiſes of temperance, of ſalutary juſtice, of law, and of peace, with open gates: let it be faithful to its truſt, and ſupplicate the Gods, and pray, that fortune may return to the afflicted, and forſake the haughty."

on

on the ſtage, who, by the mouth of one of their number, joined occaſionally in the dialogue, and were called the Chorus. That this artifice, though perhaps it might not ſuit the modern drama, had a happy effect in beautifying the poetry, illuſtrating the morality, and heightening the probability, of the ancient, is a point, which in my opinion admits of ſufficient proof, and has in fact been fully proved by Mr Maſon, in his *Letters*, and admirably exemplified in his *Elfrida* and *Caractacus;* two poems that do honour to the Engliſh tongue, and to modern genius. But I do not now enter into any controverſy on the ſubject: I ſpeak of it with a view only to obſerve, that the propriety of the character aſſigned to the chorus is founded on that moral propenſity above mentioned. For to introduce a company of unprejudiced perſons, even of the vulgar, witneſſing a great event, and yet not pitying the unfortunate, nor exclaiming againſt tyranny and injuſtice, nor rejoicing when the good are ſucceſsful, nor wiſhing well to the worthy, would be to feign what ſeldom or never happens in real life; and what, therefore, in the improved ſtate of things that poetry imitates, muſt never be ſuppoſed to happen.——Sentiments that betray a hard heart, a depraved underſtanding, unwarrantable pride, or any other moral or intellectual perverſity, never fail to give offence, except where they appear to be introduced

as

as examples for our improvement. Poetry, therefore, that is uninſtructive, or immoral, cannot pleaſe thoſe who retain any moral ſenſibility, or uprightneſs of judgement; and muſt conſequently diſpleaſe the greater part of any regular ſociety of rational creatures. Great wickedneſs and great genius may have been united in the ſame perſon; but it may be doubted, whether corruption of heart and delicacy of taſte be at all compatible.

Whenever a writer forgets himſelf ſo far, as to give us ground to ſuſpect him even of momentary impiety or hardheartedneſs, we charge him in the ſame breath with want of conſcience and want of taſte; the former being generally, as well as juſtly, ſuppoſed to comprehend the latter. Cowley was an excellent perſon, and a very witty poet: — but where is the man who would not be aſhamed to acknowledge himſelf pleaſed with that clauſe in the following quotation, which implies, that the author, puffed up with an idle conceit of the importance of literary renown, was diſpoſed for a moment to look down with equal contempt upon the brutes and the common people!

> What ſhall I do, to be for ever known,
> And make the age to come my own?
> I ſhall like beaſts or common people die,
> Unleſs you write my elegy *.
>
> Virgil,

* The learned and amiable Dr Hurd has omitted theſe two lines in his late edition of Cowley's poems. I wiſh ſome

Virgil, deſcribing a plague among the beaſts, gives the following picture, which has every excellence that can belong to deſcriptive poetry; and of which Scaliger, with a noble enthuſiaſm, declares, that he would rather be the author, than firſt favourite to Cyrus or Creſus:

Ecce autem duro fumans ſub vomere taurus
Concidit, et mixtum ſpumis vomit ore cruorem,
Extremoſque ciet gemitus. It triſtis arator,
Mærentem abjungens fraterna morte juvencum,
Atque opere in medio defixa relinquit aratra.

Which Dryden thus renders:

The ſteer, who to the yoke was bred to bow,
(Studious of tillage, and the crooked plow),
Falls down and dies; and, dying, ſpews a flood
Of foamy madneſs mixed with clotted blood.
The clown, *who curſing Providence repines*,
His mournful fellow from the team disjoins;
With many a groan forſakes his fruitleſs care,
And in th' unfiniſh'd furrow leaves the ſhare.

ſome editor of Dryden would expunge the laſt part of the following ſentence, which, as it now ſtands, is a reproach to humanity. "One is for raking in Chaucer "for antiquated words, which are never to be revived, "but when found or ſignificancy is wanting in the preſent language: but many of his deſerve not this redemption; any more than the crouds of men who "daily die or are ſlain for ſixpence in a battle, merit to "be reſtored to life, if a wiſh could revive them."

Poſtſcript to Virgil.

Not

Not to inſiſt upon the miſrepreſentation of Virgil's meaning in the firſt couplet, I would only appeal to the reader, whether, by debaſing the charming ſimplicity of *It triſtis arator* with his blaſphemous paraphraſe, Dryden has not deſtroyed the beauty of the paſſage *. Such is the oppoſition between good poetry

* Examples of bad writing might no doubt be produced, on almoſt any occaſion, from Quarles and Blackmore; but as no body reads their works, no body is liable to be miſled by them. It would ſeem, therefore, more expedient to take ſuch examples from authors of merit, whoſe beauties too often give a ſanction to their blemiſhes. For this reaſon it is, that I have, both here and in other places, taken the liberty to ſpeak of Dryden with diſapprobation. But as I would not be thought inſenſible to the merit of an author, to whom every lover of Engliſh poetry is deeply indebted, I beg leave, once for all, to deliver at large my opinion of that great genius.

There is no modern writer, whoſe ſtyle is more diſtinguiſhable. Energy and eaſe are its chief characters. The former is owing to a happy choice of expreſſions, equally emphatical and plain: the latter to a laudable partiality in favour of the idioms and radical words of the Engliſh tongue; the *native* riches and *peculiar* genius whereof are perhaps more apparent in him, than in any other of our poets. In Dryden's more correct pieces, we meet with no affectation of words of Greek or Latin etymology, no cumberſome pomp of epithets, no drawling circumlocutions, no idle glare of images, no blunderings round about a meaning: his Engliſh is pure and ſimple, nervous and clear, to a degree which Pope has never exceeded, and not always equalled. Yet, as I have elſewhere remarked, his attachment to the vernacular idiom, as well as the faſhion of his age, often betrays him into a vulgarity, and even meanneſs, of expreſſion, which is particularly obſervable in his tranſla-

poetry and bad morality! So true it is, that the bard who would captivate the heart must

tions of Virgil and Homer, and in thoſe parts of his writings where he aims at pathos or ſublimity. In fact, Dryden's genius did not lead him to the ſublime or pathetic. Good ſtrokes of both may doubtleſs be found in him; but they are momentary, and ſeem to be accidental. He is too witty for the one, and too familiar for the other. That he had no adequate reliſh for the majeſty of Paradiſe Loſt, is evident to thoſe who have compared his opera called *The ſtate of innocence* with that immortal poem; and that his taſte for the true pathetic was imperfect, too manifeſtly appears from the general tenor of his Tranſlations, as well as Tragedies. His Virgil abounds in lines and couplets of the moſt perfect beauty; but theſe are mixed with others of a different ſtamp: nor can they who judge of the original by this tranſlation, ever receive any tolerable idea of that uniform magnificence of ſound and language, that exquiſite choice of words, and figures and that ſweet pathos of expreſſion and of ſentiment, which characteriſe the Mantuan Poet. —— In delineating the more familiar ſcenes of life, in clothing plain moral doctrines with eaſy and graceful verſification, in the various departments of Comic Satire, and in the ſpirit and melody of his Lyric poems, Dryden is inferior to none of thoſe who went before him. He exceeds his maſter Chaucer in the firſt: in the three laſt he rivals Horace; the ſtyle of whoſe epiſtles he has happily imitated in his *Religio Laici*, and other didactic pieces; and the harmony and elegance of whoſe odes he has proved that he could have equalled, if he had thought proper to cultivate that branch of the poetic art. Indeed, whether we conſider his peculiar ſignificancy of expreſſion, or the purity of his ſtyle; the ſweetneſs of his lyric, or the eaſe and perſpicuity of his moral poems; the ſportive ſeverity of his ſatire, or his talents in wit and humour; Dryden, in point of *genius*, (I do not ſay *taſte*), ſeems to bear a cloſer affinity to Horace, than to any other ancient or

must sing in unison to the voice of conscience! — and that *instruction* (taking the word in no unwarrantable

modern author. For energy of words, vivacity of description, and appositе variety of numbers, his *Feast of Alexander* is superior to any ode of Horace or Pindar now extant.

Dryden's verse, though often faulty, has a grace, and a spirit, peculiar to itself. That of Pope is more correct, and perhaps upon the whole more harmonious; but it is in general more languid, and less diversified. Pope's numbers are sweet but elaborate; and our sense of their energy is in some degree interrupted by our attention to the art displayed in their contexture: Dryden's are natural and free; and, while they communicate their own sprightly motion to the spirits of the reader, hurry him along with a gentle and pleasing violence, without giving him time either to animadvert on their faults, or to analyse their beauties. Pope excels in solemnity of sound; Dryden, in an easy melody, and boundless variety of rhythm. In this last respect I think I could prove, that he is superior to all other English poets, Milton himself not excepted. Till Dryden appeared, none of our writers in rhime of the last century approached in any measure to the harmony of Fairfax and Spenser. Of Waller it can only be said, that he is not harsh; of Denham and Cowley, if a few couplets were struck out of their works, we could not say so much. But in Dryden's hands, the English rhiming couplet assumed a new form; and seems hardly susceptible of any further improvement. One of the greatest poets of this century, the late and much-lamented Mr Gray of Cambridge, modestly declared to me, that if there was in his own numbers any thing that deserved approbation, he had learned it all from Dryden.

Critics have often stated a comparison between Dryden and Pope, as poets of the same order, and who differed only in *degree* of merit. But, in my opinion, the merit of the one differs considerably in *kind* from that of the other. Both were happy in a sound judgement and most

unwarrantable latitude) is one of the means that muſt be employed to render poetry agreeable.

For

moſt comprehenſive mind. Wit, and humour, and learning too, they ſeem to have poſſeſſed in equal meaſure; or, if Dryden may be thought to have gone deeper in the ſciences, Pope muſt be allowed to have been the greater adept in the arts. The diverſities in point of correctneſs and delicacy, which aroſe from their different ways of life, I do not now inſiſt upon. But, ſetting thoſe aſide, if Dryden founds any claim of preference on the originality of his manner, we ſhall venture to affirm, that Pope may found a ſimilar claim, and with equal juſtice, on the perfection of his taſte; and that, if the critical writings of the firſt are more voluminous, thoſe of the ſecond are more judicious; if Dryden's inventions are more diverſified, thoſe of Pope are more regular, and more important. Pope's ſtyle may be thought to have leſs ſimplicity, leſs vivacity, and leſs of the purity of the mother-tongue; but is at the ſame time more uniformly elevated, and leſs debaſed by vulgariſm, than that of his great maſter: — and the ſuperior variety that animates the numbers of the latter, will perhaps be found to be compenſated by the ſteadier and more majeſtic modulation of the former. Thus far their merits would appear to be pretty equally balanced. — But if the opinion of thoſe critics be true, who hold that the higheſt regions of Parnaſſus are appropriated to pathos and ſublimity, Dryden muſt after all confeſs, that he has never aſcended ſo far as his illuſtrious imitator: there being nothing in the writings of the firſt ſo deeply pathetic as the *Epiſtle of Eloiſa*, or the *Elegy on the Unfortunate Lady*; nor ſo uniformly ſublime as the *Eſſay on Man*, or the *Paſtoral of the Meſſiah*. This laſt is indeed but a ſelection and imitation of choice paſſages; but it beſpeaks a power of imitation, and a taſte in ſelection, that Dryden does not ſeem to have poſſeſſed. To all which may I not be permitted to add, what I think I could prove, that the pathos of Homer is frequently improved

For by inſtruction I do not here underſtand merely the communication of moral and phyſical truth. Whatever tends to raiſe thoſe human affections that are favourable to truth and virtue, or to repreſs the oppoſite paſſions, will always gratify and improve our moral and intellectual powers, and may properly enough be called *inſtructive*.

by Pope, and that of Virgil very frequently debaſed by Dryden?

The writings of Dryden are ſtamped with originality, but are not always the better for that circumſtance. Pope is an imitator profeſſedly, and of choice; but to moſt of thoſe whom he copies he is at leaſt equal, and to many of them ſuperior: and it is pleaſing to obſerve, how he riſes in proportion to his originals. Where he follows Denham, Buckingham, Roſcomon, and Rocheſter, in his Windſor-foreſt, Eſſay on Criticiſm, and poem on Silence, he is ſuperior indeed, but does not ſoar very high above them. When he verſifies Chaucer, he catches, as by inſtinct, the eaſe, ſimplicity, and ſpirit of Dryden, whom he there emulates. In the Rape of the Lock he outſhines Boileau, as much as the ſylphs that flutter round Belinda exceed in ſprightlineſs and luminous beauty thoſe mechanical attendants of the goddeſs of luxury, who knead up plumpneſs for the chin of the canon, and pound vermilion for the cheek of the monk *. His Eloiſa is beyond all compariſon more ſublime and more intereſting than any of Ovid's letter-writing ladies. His imitations of Horace equal their archetypes in elegance, and often ſurpaſs them in energy and fire. In the lyric ſtyle, he was no match for Dryden: but when he copies the manner of Virgil, and borrows the thoughts of Iſaiah, Pope is ſuperior not only to himſelf, but to almoſt all other poets.

* See Rape of the Lock, canto 2. verſ. 55.; and Lutrin, chant. 2. verſ. 100.

All

All poetry, therefore, is intitled to this epithet, not only which imparts knowledge we had not before; but alſo which awakens our pity for the ſufferings of our fellow-creatures; promotes a taſte for the beauties of nature animated or inanimate; makes vice appear the object of indignation or ridicule; inculcates a ſenſe of our dependence upon Heaven; fortifies our minds againſt the evils of life; or promotes the love of virtue and wiſdom, either by delineating their native charms, or by ſetting before us in ſuitable colours the dreadful conſequences of imprudent and immoral conduct. There are few good poems of length, that will not be found in one or more or perhaps in ſeveral of theſe reſpects, to promote the inſtruction of a reader of taſte. Even the poem of Lucretius, notwithſtanding its abſurd philoſophy, (which, when the author gives way to it, diveſts him for a time of the poetical, and even of the rational, character), abounds in ſentiments of great beauty and high importance; and in ſuch delightful pictures of nature, as muſt inflame the enthuſiaſm wherewith a well-informed mind contemplates the wonders and glories of creation. Who can attend to the execrable deſigns of Iago, to Macbeth's progreſs through the ſeveral ſtages of guilt and miſery, to the ruin that overtakes the impious and tyrannical Mezentius, to the thoughts and machinations of Satan and his angels in Paradiſe Loſt, without paying

ing a freſh tribute of praiſe to virtue, and renewing his reſolutions to perſevere in the paths of innocence and peace! Nay the machinery of Homer's deities, which in many parts I abandon as indefenſible, will, if I miſtake not, generally appear, where-ever it is really pleaſing, to have ſomewhat of an uſeful tendency. I ſpeak not now of the importance of machinery, as an inſtrument of the ſublime and of the marvellous, neceſſary to every epic poem; but of Homer's uſe of it in thoſe paſſages where it is ſuppoſed by ſome to be unneceſſary. And in theſe, it often ſerves to ſet off a ſimple fact with allegorical decoration, and, of courſe, by intereſting us more in the fable, to impreſs upon us more effectually the inſtruction conveyed in it. And ſometimes it is to be conſidered, as nothing more than a perſonification of the attributes of the divinity, or the operations of the human ſoul. And, in general, it teaches emphatically this important leſſon, that Providence ever ſuperintends the affairs of men; that injuſtice and impiety are peculiarly obnoxious to divine vengeance; and that a proper attention to religious and moral duty, never fails to recommend both nations and individuals to the divine favour.

But if inſtruction may be drawn from the ſpeeches and behaviour of Milton's devils, of Shakeſpeare's Macbeth, and of Virgil's Mezentius, why is Cowley blamed for a phraſe, which at worſt implies only a ſlight

ſally

ſally of momentary pride? I anſwer, that to ſpeak ſeriouſly the language of intemperate paſſion, is one thing; to imitate or deſcribe it another. By the former, one can never merit praiſe or eſteem; by the latter one may merit much praiſe, and do much good. In the one caſe, we recommend intemperate paſſions by our example; in the other, we may render them odious, by diſplaying their abſurdity and conſequences. To the greater part of his readers an author cannot convey either pleaſure or inſtruction, by delivering ſentiments as his own, which contradict the general conſcience of mankind.

Well; but Dryden, in the paſſage lately quoted and cenſured, does not deliver his own ſentiments, but only deſcribes thoſe of another: why then ſhould he be blamed for making the unfortunate plowman irreligious? Why? Becauſe he miſrepreſents his author's meaning; and (which is worſe) counteracts his deſign. The deſign of the Latin poet was, not to expatiate on the puniſhment due to blaſphemy or atheiſm, but to raiſe pity, by deſcribing the melancholy effects of a plague ſo fatal to the brute creation: — a theme very properly introduced in the concluſion of a poem on the art of rearing and preſerving cattle. Now, had Virgil ſaid, as Dryden has done, that the farmer who loſt his work-beaſt was a blaſphemer, we ſhould not have pitied him at all. But Virgil ſays only,

ly, that "the ſorrowful huſbandman went, "and unyoked the ſurviving bullock, and "left his plough fixed in the middle of the "unfiniſhed furrow;"—and by this pregnant and pictureſque brevity, affects us a thouſand times more, than he could have done by recapitulating all the ſentiments of the poor farmer in the form of a ſoliloquy:—as indeed the view of the ſcene, as Virgil has drawn it, with the emphatic ſilence of the ſufferer, would have been incomparably more moving, than a long ſpeech from the plowman, fraught with moral reflections on death, and diſappointment, and the uncertainty of human things. For to a poem mere morality is not ſo eſſential as accurate deſcription; which, however, in matters of importance, muſt have a moral tendency, otherwiſe the human affections will take part againſt it.

But what do you ſay to the tragedy of *Venice preſerved*, in which our pity and other benevolent emotions are engaged in behalf of thoſe whom the moral faculty diſapproves? Is not the poetry, for this very reaſon, immoral? And yet, is it not pathetic and pleaſing? How then can you ſay, that ſomething of a moral or inſtructive tendency is neceſſary to make a poem agreeable?—In anſwer to this, let it be obſerved,—firſt, That it is natural for us to ſympathiſe with thoſe who ſuffer, even when they ſuffer juſtly; which, however, implies not

any liking to their crimes, or that our moral ſentiments are at all perverted, but which, on the contrary, by quickening our ſenſe of the miſery conſequent upon guilt, may be uſeful in confirming good principles, and improving the moral ſenſibility of the mind: — ſecondly, That the moſt pleaſing and moſt pathetic parts of the play in queſtion are thoſe which relate to an amiable lady, with whoſe diſtreſs, as well as with her huſband's on her account, we rationally ſympathiſe, becauſe that ariſes from their mutual affection: — thirdly, That the conſpirators give a plauſible colour to their cauſe, and exert a greatneſs of mind, which takes off our attention from their crimes, and leaves room for the tender emotions to operate occaſionally in their favour: — and fourthly, That the merit of this play, like that of *the Orphan*, lies rather in the beauty of particular paſſages, than in the general effect of the whole; and that, if in any part the author has endeavoured to intereſt our kind affections in oppoſition to conſcience, his poetry will there be found to be equally unpleaſing and uninſtructive.

But may not agreeable affections ariſe in the mind, which partake neither of vice nor of virtue; ſuch as joy, and hope, and thoſe emotions that accompany the contemplation of external beauty, or magnificence? And, if paſtorals and ſongs, and Anacreontic odes, awaken theſe agreeable affections, may not

ſuch poems be pleaſing, without being inſtructive? This may be, no doubt. And for this reaſon, among others, I take inſtruction to be only a ſecondary end of poetry. But it is only by ſhort poems, as ſongs and paſtorals, that theſe agreeable affections indifferent alike to vice and virtue, are excited, without any mixture of others. For moral ſentiments are ſo prevalent in the human mind, that no affection can long ſubſiſt there, without intermingling with them, and being aſſimilated to their nature. Nor can a piece of real and pleaſing poetry be extended to any great length, without operating, directly or indirectly, either on thoſe affections that are friendly to virtue, or on thoſe ſympathies that quicken our moral ſenſibility, and prepare us for virtuous impreſſions. In fact, man's true happineſs is derived from the moral part of his conſtitution; and therefore we cannot ſuppoſe, that any thing which affects not his moral part, ſhould be laſtingly and generally agreeable. We ſympathiſe with the pleaſure one takes in a feaſt, where there is friendſhip, and an interchange of good offices; but not with the ſatisfaction an epicure finds in devouring a ſolitary banquet. A ſhort Anacreontic we may reliſh for its melody and ſparkling images; but a long poem, in order to be pleaſing, muſt not only charm the ear and the fancy, but alſo touch the heart and exerciſe the conſcience.

Still

Still perhaps it may be objected to these reasonings, That Horace, in a well-known verse *, declares the end of poetry to be twofold, to please, or to instruct; whereas we maintain, that the ultimate end of this art is to please; instruction being only one of the means (and not always a necessary one) by which that ultimate end is to be accomplished. This interpretation of Horace has indeed been admitted by some modern critics: but it is erroneous; for the passage, rightly understood, will not appear to contain any thing inconsistent with the present doctrine. The author is there stating a comparison between the Greek and Roman writers, with a view to the poetry of the stage; and, after commending the former for their correctness, and for the liberal spirit wherewith they conducted their literary labours, and blaming his countrymen for their inaccuracy and avarice, he proceeds thus: "The ends proposed by our dramatic poets "(or by poets in general) are, to please, to "instruct, or to do both. When instruction "is your aim, let your moral sentences be "expressed with brevity, that they may be "readily understood, and long remembered: "where you mean to please, let your fictions "be conformable to truth, or probability. "The elder part of your audience (or read-"ers) have no relish for poems that give

* Aut prodesse volunt, aut delectare poetæ.

" pleaſure only without inſtruction; nor " the younger for ſuch writings as give in- " ſtruction without pleaſure. He only can " ſecure the univerſal ſuffrage in his favour, " who blends the uſeful with the agreeable, " and delights at the ſame time that he in- " ſtructs the reader. Such are the works " that bring money to the bookſeller, that " paſs into foreign countries, and perpetuate " the author's name through a long ſuc- " ceſſion of ages *." —— Now, what is the meaning of all this? What, but that to the *perfection* of dramatic poetry (or, if you pleaſe, of poetry in general) both ſound morals and beautiful fiction are requiſite. But Horace never meant to ſay, that inſtruction, as well as pleaſure, is neceſſary to give to any compoſition the *poetical character*: or he would not in another place have celebrated, with ſo much affection and rapture, the melting ſtrains of Sappho, and the playful genius of Anacreon †; — two authors tranſcendently ſweet, but not remarkably inſtructive. We are ſure, that pathos, and harmony, and elevated language, were, in Horace's opinion, eſſential to poetry ‡; and of theſe decorations no body will affirm, that inſtruction is the end, who conſiders that the

* Hor. Ar. Poet. 333. — 347.

† Hor. Carm. lib. 4. ode 9.

‡ Hor. Sat. lib. 1. ſat. 4. verſ. 40.

moſt

moſt inſtructive books in the world are written in plain proſe.

Let this therefore be eſtabliſhed as a truth in criticiſm, That the end of poetry is, TO PLEASE. Verſes, if pleaſing, may be poetical, though they convey little or no inſtruction; but verſes, whoſe ſole merit is, that they convey inſtruction, are not poetical. Inſtruction, however, eſpecially in poems of length, is neceſſary to their *perfection*, becauſe they would not be *perfectly agreeable* without it.

CHAP. II.

Of the Standard of Poetical Invention.

HOMER's beautiful deſcription of the heavens and earth, as they appear in a calm evening by the light of the moon and ſtars, concludes with this circumſtance, "And the heart of the ſhepherd is glad *." Madame Dacier, from the turn ſhe gives to the paſſage in her verſion, ſeems to think, and Pope, in order perhaps to make out his couplet, inſinuates, that the gladneſs of the

* Iliad, b. 8. verſ. 555.

ſhepherd

ſhepherd is owing to his ſenſe of the utility of thoſe luminaries. And this may in part be the caſe: but this is not in Homer; nor is it a neceſſary conſideration. It is true, that, in contemplating the material univerſe, they who diſcern the cauſes and effects of things muſt be more rapturouſly entertained, than thoſe who perceive nothing but ſhape and ſize, colour and motion. Yet, in the mere outſide of Nature's works, (if I may ſo expreſs myſelf), there is a ſplendour and a magnificence to which even untutored minds cannot attend, without great delight.

Not that all peaſants, or all philoſophers, are equally ſuſceptible of theſe charming impreſſions. It is ſtrange to obſerve the calouſneſs of ſome men, before whom all the glories of heaven and earth paſs in daily ſucceſſion, without touching their hearts, elevating their fancy, or leaving any durable remembrance. Even of thoſe who pretend to ſenſibility, how many are there to whom the luſtre of the riſing or ſetting ſun; the ſparkling concave of the midnight-ſky; the mountain-foreſt toſſing and roaring to the ſtorm, or warbling with all the melodies of a ſummer-evening; the ſweet interchange of hill and dale, ſhade and ſunſhine, grove, lawn, and water, which an extenſive landſcape offers to the view; the ſcenery of the ocean, ſo lovely, ſo majeſtic, and ſo tremendous, and the many pleaſing varieties of the animal and vegetable kingdom, could never afford

afford ſo much real ſatisfaction, as the ſteams and noiſe of a ball-room, the inſipid fiddling and ſqueaking of an opera, or the vexations and wranglings of a card-table!

But ſome minds there are of a different make; who, even in the early part of life, receive from the contemplation of Nature a ſpecies of delight which they would hardly exchange for any other; and who, as avarice and ambition are not the infirmities of that period, would, with equal ſincerity and rapture, exclaim,

I care not, Fortune, what you me deny;
You cannot rob me of free Nature's grace;
You cannot ſhut the windows of the ſky,
Through which Aurora ſhows her brightening face;
You cannot bar my conſtant feet to trace
The woods and lawns by living ſtream at eve *. ——

Such minds have always in them the ſeeds of true taſte, and frequently of imitative genius. At leaſt, though their enthuſiaſtic or viſionary turn of mind (as the man of the world would call it) ſhould not always incline them to practiſe poetry or painting, we need not ſcruple to affirm, that without ſome portion of this enthuſiaſm, no perſon ever became a true poet or painter. For he who would imitate the works of Nature, muſt firſt accurately obſerve them; and accurate

* Caſtle of Indolence.

obſervation

obſervation is to be expected from thoſe only who take great pleaſure in it.

To a mind thus diſpoſed no part of creation is indifferent. In the crouded city, and howling wilderneſs; in the cultivated province, and ſolitary iſle; in the flowery lawn, and craggy mountain; in the murmur of the rivulet, and in the uproar of the ocean; in the radiance of ſummer, and gloom of winter; in the thunder of heaven, and in the whiſper of the breeze; he ſtill finds ſomething to rouſe or to ſooth his imagination, to draw forth his affections, or to employ his underſtanding. And from every mental energy that is not attended with pain, and even from ſome of thoſe that are, as moderate terror and pity, a ſound mind derives ſatisfaction; exerciſe being equally neceſſary to the body and the ſoul, and to both equally productive of health and pleaſure.

This happy ſenſibility to the beauties of Nature ſhould be cheriſhed in young perſons. It engages them to contemplate the Creator in his wonderful works; it purifies and harmonizes the ſoul, and prepares it for moral and intellectual diſcipline; it ſupplies an endleſs ſource of amuſement; it contributes even to bodily health; and, as a ſtrict analogy ſubſiſts between material and moral beauty, it leads the heart by an eaſy tranſition from the one to the other; and thus recommends virtue for its tranſcendent love-

lineſs, and makes vice appear the object of contempt and abomination. An intimate acquaintance with the beſt deſcriptive poets, Spenſer, Milton, and Thomſon, but above all with the divine Georgic, joined to ſome practice in the art of drawing, will promote this amiable ſenſibility in early years; for then the face of Nature has novelty ſuperadded to its other charms, the paſſions are not pre-engaged, the heart is free from care, and the imagination warm and romantic.

But, not to inſiſt longer on thoſe ardent emotions that are peculiar to the enthuſiaſtic diſciple of Nature, may it not be affirmed of all men, without exception, or at leaſt of all the enlightened part of mankind, that they are gratified by the contemplation of things natural, as oppoſed to unnatural? Monſtrous ſights pleaſe but for a moment, if they pleaſe at all; for they derive their charm from the beholder's amazement, which is quickly over. I have read indeed of a man of rank in Sicily *, who chuſes to adorn his villa with pictures and ſtatues of moſt unnatural deformity; but it is a ſingular inſtance: and one would not be much more ſurpriſed to hear of a perſon living without food, or growing fat by the uſe of poiſon. To ſay of any thing, that it is *contrary to nature*, denotes cenſure and diſguſt on the part of the ſpeaker; as the epithet *natural*

* See Mr Brydone's Tour in Sicily, letter 24.

intimates an agreeable quality, and ſeems for the moſt part to imply, that a thing is as it ought to be, ſuitable to our own taſte, and congenial with our own conſtitution. Think, with what ſentiments we ſhould peruſe a poem, in which Nature was totally miſrepreſented, and principles of thought and of operation ſuppoſed to take place, repugnant to every thing we had ſeen or heard of: — in which, for example, avarice and coldneſs were aſcribed to youth, and prodigality and paſſionate attachment to the old; in which men were made to act at random, ſometimes according to character, and ſometimes contrary to it; in which cruelty and envy were productive of love, and beneficence and kind affection of hatred; in which beauty was invariably the object of diſlike, and uglineſs of deſire; in which ſociety was rendered happy by atheiſm, and the promiſcuous perpetration of crimes, and juſtice and fortitude were held in univerſal contempt. Or think, how we ſhould reliſh a painting, where no regard was had to the proportions, colours, or any of the phyſical laws, of Nature: — where the ears and eyes of animals were placed in their ſhoulders; where the ſky was green, and the graſs crimſon; where trees grew with their branches in the earth, and their roots in the air; where men were ſeen fighting after their heads were cut off, ſhips ſailing on the land, lions entangled in cobwebs, ſheep preying on dead carcaſſes, fiſhes

fiſhes ſporting in the woods, and elephants walking on the ſea. Could ſuch figures and combinations give pleaſure, or merit the appellation of ſublime or beautiful? Should we heſitate to pronounce their author mad? And are the abſurdities of madmen proper ſubjects either of amuſement or of imitation to reaſonable beings?

Let it be remarked too, that though we diſtinguiſh our internal powers by different names, becauſe otherwiſe we could not ſpeak of them ſo as to be underſtood, they are all but ſo many energies of the ſame individual mind; and therefore it is not to be ſuppoſed, that what contradicts any one leading faculty ſhould yield permanent delight to the reſt. That cannot be agreeable to reaſon, which conſcience diſapproves; nor can that gratify imagination, which is repugnant to reaſon.—— Beſides, belief and acquieſcence of mind are pleaſant, as diſtruſt and diſbelief are painful; and therefore, that only can give ſolid and general ſatisfaction, which has ſomething of plauſibility in it; ſomething which we conceive it poſſible for a rational being to believe. But no rational being can acquieſce in what is obviouſly contrary to nature, or implies palpable abſurdity.

Poetry, therefore, and indeed every art whoſe end is to pleaſe, muſt be natural; and if ſo, muſt exhibit real matter of fact, or ſomething like it; that is, in other words,

muſt be, either according to truth, or according to veriſimilitude.

And though every part of the material univerſe abounds in objects of pleaſurable contemplation, yet nothing in nature ſo powerfully touches our hearts, or gives ſo great variety of exerciſe to our moral and intellectual faculties, as man. Human affairs and human feelings are univerſally intereſting. There are many who have no great reliſh for the poetry that delineates only irrational or inanimate beings; but to that which exhibits the fortunes, the characters, and the conduct of men, there is hardly any perſon who does not liſten with ſympathy and delight. And hence, to imitate human action, is conſidered by Ariſtotle as eſſential to this art; and muſt be allowed to be eſſential to the moſt pleaſing and moſt inſtructive part of it, I mean to epic and dramatic compoſition. Mere deſcriptions, however beautiful, and moral reflections, however juſt, become tireſome, where our paſſions are not occaſionally awakened by ſome event that concerns our fellow-men. Do not all readers of taſte receive peculiar pleaſure from thoſe little tales or epiſodes, with which Thomſon's deſcriptive poem on the Seaſons is here and there enlivened? and are they not ſenſible, that the thunder-ſtorm would not have been half ſo intereſting without the tale of the two lovers *; nor the

* Summer, verſ. 1171.

harveſt-

harveſt-ſcene, without that of Palemon and Lavinia *; nor the driving ſnows, without that exquiſite picture of a man periſhing among them †? It is much to be regretted, that Young did not employ the ſame artifice to animate his Night-Thoughts. Sentiments and deſcriptions may be regarded as the pilaſters, carvings, gildings, and other decorations of the poetical fabric; but human actions are the columns and the rafters, that give it ſtability and elevation. Or, changing the metaphor, we may conſider theſe as the ſoul which informs the lovely frame; while thoſe are little more than the ornaments of the body.

Whether the pleaſure we take in things natural, and our diſlike to what is the reverſe, be the effect of habit or of conſtitution, is not a material inquiry. There is nothing abſurd in ſuppoſing, that between the ſoul, in its firſt formation, and the reſt of nature, a mutual harmony and ſympathy may have been eſtabliſhed, which experience may indeed confirm, but no perverſe habits could entirely ſubdue. As no ſort of education could make man believe the contrary of a ſelf-evident axiom, or reconcile him to a life of perfect ſolitude; ſo I ſhould imagine, that our love of nature and regularity might ſtill remain with us in ſome degree,

* Autumn, verſ. 177.

† Winter, verſ. 276.

though

though we had been born and bred in the Sicilian villa above mentioned, and never heard any thing applauded but what deſerved cenſure, nor cenſured but what merited applauſe. Yet habit muſt be allowed to have a powerful influence over the ſentiments and feelings of mankind. Objects to which we have been long accuſtomed, we are apt to contract a fondneſs for; we conceive them readily, and contemplate them with pleaſure; nor do we quit our old tracts of ſpeculation or practice, without reluctance and pain. Hence in part ariſes our attachment to our own profeſſions, our old acquaintance, our native ſoil, our homes, and to the very hills, ſtreams, and rocks in our neighbourhood. It would therefore be ſtrange, if man, accuſtomed as he is from his earlieſt days to the regularity of nature, did not contract a liking to her productions, and principles of operation.

Yet we neither expect nor deſire, that every human invention, where the end is only to pleaſe, ſhould be an exact tranſcript of real exiſtence. It is enough, that the mind acquieſce in it as probable, or plauſible, or ſuch as we think might happen without any direct oppoſition to the laws of Nature: — or, to ſpeak more accurately, it is enough, that it be conſiſtent, either, firſt, with general experience; or, ſecondly, with popular opinion; or, thirdly, that it be conſiſtent

ent with itſelf, and connected with probable circumſtances.

Firſt: If a human invention be conſiſtent with *general* experience, we acquieſce in it as ſufficiently probable. *Particular* experiences, however, there may be, ſo uncommon and ſo little expected, that we ſhould not admit their probability, if we did not know them to be true. No man of ſenſe believes, that he has any likelihood of being enriched by the diſcovery of hidden treaſure; or thinks it probable, on purchaſing a lottery-ticket, that he ſhall gain the firſt prize; and yet great wealth has actually been acquired by ſuch good fortune. But we ſhould look upon theſe as poor expedients in a play or romance for bringing about a happy cataſtrophe. We expect that fiction ſhould be more conſonant to the *general* tenor of human affairs; in a word, that not poſſibility, but probability, ſhould be the ſtandard of poetical invention.

Secondly: Fiction is admitted as conformable to this ſtandard, when it accords with received opinions. Theſe may be erroneous, but are not often *apparently* repugnant to nature. On this account, and becauſe they are familiar to us from our infancy, the mind readily acquieſces in them, or at leaſt yields them that degree of credit which is neceſſary to render them pleaſing. Hence the fairies, ghoſts, and witches of Shakeſpeare, are admitted as probable beings; and angels obtain

obtain a place in religious pictures, though we know that they do not now appear in the ſcenery of real life. Even when a popular opinion has long been exploded, and has become repugnant to univerſal belief, the fictions built upon it are ſtill admitted as natural, becauſe they were accounted ſuch by the people to whom they were firſt addreſſed; whoſe ſentiments and views of things we are willing to adopt, when, by the power of pleaſing deſcription, we are introduced into their ſcenes, and made acquainted with their manners. Hence we admit the theology of the ancient poets, their Elyſium and Tartarus, Scylla and Charybdis, Cyclops and Circe, and the reſt of thoſe "beautiful wonders" (as Horace calls them) which were believed in the heroic ages; as well as the demons and inchantments of Taſſo, which may be ſuppoſed to have obtained no ſmall degree of credit among the Italians of the ſixteenth century, and are ſuitable enough to the notions that prevailed univerſally in Europe not long before *. In fact, when Poetry

* In the fourteenth century, the common people of Italy believed, that the poet Dante actually went down to hell; that the *Inferno* was a true account of what he ſaw there; and that his ſallow complexion, and ſtunted beard, (which ſeemed by its growth and colour to have been too near the fire), were the conſequence of his paſſing ſo much of his time in that hot and ſmoky region. *See Vicende della literatura del Sig. C. Denina, cap.* 4. —— Sir John Mandeville's Book of Travels, written

Poetry is in other reſpects true; when it gives an accurate diſplay of thoſe parts of nature about which we know that men in all ages muſt have entertained the ſame opinion, I mean thoſe appearances in the viſible creation, and thoſe feelings and workings of the human mind, which are obvious to all mankind; — when Poetry, I ſay, is thus far according to nature, we are very willing to be indulgent to what is fictitious in it, and to grant a temporary allowance to any ſyſtem of fable which the author pleaſes to adopt; provided that he lay the ſcene in a diſtant country, or fix the date to a remote period. This is no unreaſonable piece of complaiſance: we owe it both to the poet and to ourſelves; for without it we ſhould neither form a right eſtimate of his genius, nor receive from his works that pleaſure which they were intended to impart. Let him, however, take care, that his ſyſtem of fable be ſuch, as his countrymen and contemporaries (to whom his work is immediately addreſſed) might be ſuppoſed capable of yielding their aſſent to; for otherwiſe we ſhould not believe him to be in earneſt: and let him connect it as much as he can with

ten not long after, was not only ratified by the Pope, after having been compared with the *Mappa Mundi* of that time, but, what is more ſtrange, ſeems to have been ſeriouſly believed by that adventurous knight himſelf, though a man of conſiderable learning, and no deſpicable taſte. *See the Concluſion of the Book.*

probable circumſtances, and make it appear in a ſeries of events conſiſtent with itſelf.

For (thirdly) if this be the caſe, we ſhall admit his ſtory as probable, or at leaſt as natural, and conſequently be intereſted in it, even though it be not warranted by general experience, and derive but ſlender authority from popular opinion. Calyban, in the Tempeſt, would have ſhocked the mind as an improbability, if we had not been made acquainted with his origin, and ſeen his character diſplayed in a ſeries of conſiſtent behaviour. But when we are told, that he ſprung from a witch and a demon, a connection not contrary to the laws of Nature, as they were underſtood in Shakeſpeare's time, and find his manners conformable to his deſcent, we are eaſily reconciled to the fiction. In the ſame ſenſe, the Lilliputians of Swift may paſs for probable beings; not ſo much becauſe we know that a belief in pygmies was once current in the world, (for the true ancient pygmy was at leaſt thrice as tall as thoſe whom Gulliver viſited), but becauſe we find, that every circumſtance relating to them accords with itſelf, and with their ſuppoſed character. It is not the ſize of the people only that is diminutive; their country, ſeas, ſhips, and towns, are all in exact proportion; their theological and political principles, their paſſions, manners, cuſtoms, and all the parts of their conduct, betray a levity and littleneſs perfectly ſuitable;

ble: and ſo ſimple is the whole narration, and apparently ſo artleſs and ſincere, that I ſhould not much wonder, if it had impoſed (as I have been told it has) upon ſome perſons of no contemptible underſtanding. The ſame degree of credit may perhaps for the ſame reaſons be due to his giants. But when he grounds his narrative upon a contradiction to nature; when he preſents us with rational brutes, and irrational men; when he tells us of horſes building houſes for habitation, milking cows for food, riding in carriages, and holding converſations on the laws and politics of Europe; not all his genius (and he there exerts it to the utmoſt) is able to reconcile us to ſo monſtrous a fiction: we may ſmile at ſome of his abſurd exaggerations; we may be pleaſed with the energy of ſtyle, and accuracy of deſcription, in particular places; and a malevolent heart may triumph in the ſatire: but we can never reliſh it as a fable, becauſe it is at once unnatural and ſelf-contradictory. Swift's judgement ſeems to have forſaken him on this occaſion *: he wallows in naſtineſs and brutality;

* There are improprieties in this narrative, which one would think a very ſlight attention to nature might have prevented; and which, without heightening the ſatire, ſerve only to aggravate the abſurdity of the fable. *Houyhnhnms* are horſes in perfection, with the addition of reaſon and virtue. Whatever, therefore, takes away from their perfection as horſes, without adding to

brutality; and the general run of his ſatire is downright defamation. Lucian's *True* Hiſtory is a heap of extravagancies put together without order or unity, or any other apparent deſign, than to ridicule the language and manner of grave authors. His ravings, which have no better right to the name of Fable, than a hill of rubbiſh has to that of Palace, are deſtitute of every colour of plauſibility. Animal trees, ſhips ſailing in the ſky, armies of monſtrous things travelling between the ſun and moon on a pave-

their rational and moral accompliſhments, muſt be repugnant to the author's deſign, and ought not to have found a place in his narration. Yet he makes his beloved quadrupeds *dwell in houſes* of their own building, and uſe *warm food* and the *milk of cows* as a delicacy: though theſe luxuries, ſuppoſed attainable by a nation of horſes, could contribute no more to their perfection, than brandy and impriſonment would to that of a man. —— Again, did Swift believe, that religious ideas are natural to a reaſonable being, and neceſſary to the happineſs of a moral one? I hope he did. Yet has he repreſented his *houyhnhnms*, as patterns of moral virtue, as the greateſt maſters of reaſon, and withal as completely happy, without any religious ideas, or any views beyond the preſent life. In a word, he would make ſtupidity conſiſtent with mental excellence, and unnatural appetites with animal perfection. Theſe, however, are ſmall matters, compared with the other abſurdities of this abominable tale. — But when a Chriſtian Divine can ſet himſelf deliberately to trample upon that nature, which he knows to have been made but a little lower than the angels, and to have been aſſumed by One far more exalted than they; we need not be ſurpriſed if the ſame perverſe habits of thinking which harden his heart, ſhould alſo debaſe his judgement.

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ment of cobwebs, rival nations of men inhabiting woods and mountains in a whale's belly, — are liker the dreams of a bedlamite, than the inventions of a rational being.

If we were to profecute this fubject any further, it would be proper to remark, that in fome kinds of poetical invention a ftricter probability is required than in others: — that, for inftance, Comedy, whether Dramatic or Narrative *, muft feldom deviate from the ordinary courfe of human affairs, becaufe it exhibits the manners of real, and even of familiar life; — that the Tragic poet, becaufe he imitates characters more exalted, and generally refers to events little known, or long fince paft, may be allowed a wider range; but muft never attempt the marvellous fictions of the Epic Mufe, becaufe he addreffes his work, not only to the paffions and imagination of mankind, but alfo to their eyes and ears, which are not eafily impofed on, and refufe to be gratified with any repreſentation that does not come very near the truth; — that the Epic Poem may claim ftill ampler privileges, becaufe its fictions are not fubject to the fcrutiny of any outward fenfe, and becaufe it conveys information in regard both to the higheft human characters, and the moft important and wonderful events,

* Fielding's *Tom Jones*, *Amelia*, and *Joſeph Andrews*, are examples of what I call the Epic or Narrative Comedy: perhaps *the Comic Epopee* is a more proper term.

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and alſo to the affairs of unſeen worlds, and ſuperior beings. Nor would it be improper to obſerve, that the ſeveral ſpecies of Comic, of Tragic, of Epic compoſition, are not confined to the ſame degree of probability; for that Farce may be allowed to be leſs probable than the regular Comedy; the Maſque, than the regular Tragedy; and the Mixed Epic, ſuch as The Fairy Queen, and Orlando Furioſo, than the pure Epopee of Homer, Virgil, and Milton.——But this part of the ſubject ſeems not to require further illuſtration. Enough has been ſaid, to ſhow, that nothing unnatural can pleaſe; and that therefore Poetry, whoſe end is to pleaſe, muſt be ACCORDING TO NATURE.

And if ſo, it muſt be, either according to real nature, or according to nature ſomewhat different from the reality.

CHAP. III.

Poetry exhibits a ſyſtem of nature ſomewhat different from the reality of things.

TO exhibit *real nature* is the buſineſs of the hiſtorian; who, if he were ſtrictly to confine himſelf to his own ſphere, would never

never record even the minuteſt circumſtance of any ſpeech, event, or deſcription, which was not warranted by ſufficient authority. It has been the language of critics in every age, that the hiſtorian ought to relate nothing as true which is falſe or dubious, and to conceal nothing material which he knows to be true. But I doubt whether any writer of profane hiſtory has ever been ſo ſcrupulous. Thucydides himſelf, who began his hiſtory when that war began which he records, and who ſet down every event ſoon after it happened, according to the moſt authentic information, ſeems however to have indulged his fancy not a little in his harangues and deſcriptions, particularly that of the plague of Athens: and the ſame thing has been practiſed, with greater latitude, by Livy and Tacitus, and more or leſs by all the beſt hiſtorians, both ancient and modern. Nor do I blame them for it. By theſe improved or invented ſpeeches, and by the heightenings thus given to their deſcriptions, their work becomes more intereſting, and more uſeful; nobody is deceived, and hiſtorical truth is not materially affected. A medium is however to be obſerved in this, as in other things. When the hiſtorian lengthens a deſcription into a detail of fictitious events, as Voltaire has done in his account of the battle of Fontenoy, he loſes his credit with us, by raiſing a ſuſpicion that he is more intent upon a pretty ſtory, than

upon

upon the truth. And we are diſguſted with his inſincerity, when, in defiance even of veriſimilitude, he puts long elaborate orations in the mouth of thoſe, of whom we know, either from the circumſtances that they could not, or from more authentic records that they did not, make any ſuch orations; as Dionyſius of Halicarnaſſus has done, in the caſe of Volumnia haranguing her ſon Coriolanus, and Flavius Joſephus in that of Judah addreſſing his brother as viceroy of Egypt. From what theſe hiſtorians relate, one would conjecture, that the Roman matron had ſtudied at Athens under ſome long-winded rhetorician, and that the Jewiſh patriarch muſt have been one of the moſt flowery orators of antiquity. But the fictitious part of hiſtory, or of ſtory-telling, ought never to take up much room; and muſt be highly blameable when it leads into any miſtake either of facts or of characters.

Now, why do hiſtorians take the liberty to embelliſh their works in this manner? One reaſon, no doubt, is, that they may diſplay their talents in oratory and narration: but the chief reaſon, as hinted already, is, to render their compoſition more agreeable. It would ſeem, then, that ſomething more pleaſing than real nature, or ſomething which ſhall add to the pleaſing qualities of real nature, may be deviſed by human fancy. And this may certainly be done. And this it is the poet's buſineſs to do. And when

this is in any degree done by the hiſtorian, his narrative becomes in that degree poetical.

The poſſibility of thus improving upon nature muſt be obvious to every one. When we look at a landſcape, we can fancy a thouſand additional embelliſhments. Mountains loftier and more pictureſque; rivers more copious, more limpid, and more beautifully winding; ſmoother and wider lawns; vallies more richly diverſified; caverns and rocks more gloomy and more ſtupendous; ruins more majeſtic; buildings more magnificent; oceans more varied with iſlands, more ſplendid with ſhipping, or more agitated by ſtorm, than any we have ever ſeen, it is eaſy for human imagination to conceive. Many things in art and nature exceed expectation; but nothing ſenſible tranſcends, or equals, the capacity of thought: — a ſtriking evidence of the dignity of the human ſoul! The fineſt woman in the world appears to every eye ſuſceptible of improvement, except perhaps to that of her lover. No wonder, then, if in poetry events can be exhibited more compact, and of more pleaſing variety, than thoſe delineated by the hiſtorian, and ſcenes of inanimate nature more dreadful or more lovely, and human characters more ſublime and more exquiſite both in good and evil. Yet ſtill let nature ſupply the ground-work and materials, as well as the ſtandard, of poetical fiction. The moſt expert painters

uſe a layman, or other viſible figure, to direct their hand and regulate their fancy. Homer himſelf founds his two poems on authentic tradition; and Tragic as well as Epic poets have followed the example. The writers of romance too are ambitious to interweave true adventures with their fables; and, when it can be conveniently done, to take the outlines of their plan from real life. Thus the tale of Robinſon Cruſoe is founded on an incident that actually befel one Alexander Selkirk, a ſea-faring man, who lived ſeveral years alone in the iſland of Juan Fernandes; Smollet is thought to have given us ſeveral of his own adventures in the hiſtory of Roderick Random; and the chief characters in Tom Jones, Joſeph Andrews, and Pamela, are ſaid to have been copied from real originals.—Dramatic Comedy, indeed, is for the moſt part purely fictitious; for if it were to exhibit real events as well as preſent manners, it would become too perſonal to be endured by a well-bred audience, and degenerate into downright abuſe; which appears to have been the caſe with the *old comedy* of the Greeks *.—But, in general, hints taken from real exiſtence will be found to give no little grace and ſtability to fiction, even in the moſt fanciful poems. Thoſe hints, however, may be improved by

* Compare Hor. lib. 1. ſat. 4. verſ. 1.—5. with Ar. Poet. verſ. 281.—285.

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the poet's imagination, and ſet off with every probable ornament that can be deviſed, conſiſtently with the deſign and genius of the work; — or, in other words, with the ſympathies that the poet means to awaken in the mind of his reader. For mere poetical ornament, when it fails to intereſt the affections, is not only uſeleſs but improper; all true poetry being addreſſed to the heart, and intended to give pleaſure by raiſing or ſoothing the paſſions; — the only effectual way of pleaſing a rational and moral creature. And therefore I would take Horace's maxim to be univerſal in poetry; "Non ſatis eſt, pulchra eſſe poemata; *dulcia* ſunto;" "It is "not enough that poems be beautiful; let "them alſo be *affecting*:" — for that this is the meaning of the word *dulcia* in this place, is admitted by the beſt interpreters, and is indeed evident from the context *.

That the ſentiments and feelings of percipient beings, when expreſſed in poetry, ſhould call forth our affections, is natural enough; but can deſcriptions of inanimate things alſo be made affecting? Certainly they can: and the more they affect, the more they pleaſe us; and the more poetical we allow them to be. Virgil's Georgic is a noble ſpecimen (and indeed the nobleſt in the world) of this ſort of poetry. His admiration of external nature gains upon a read-

* Hor. Ar. Poet. verſ. 95. — 100.

er of taſte, till it riſe to perfect enthuſiaſm. The following obſervations will perhaps explain this matter.

Every thing in nature is complex in itſelf, and bears innumerable relations to other things; and may therefore be viewed in an endleſs variety of lights, and conſequently deſcribed in an endleſs variety of ways. Some deſcriptions are good, and others bad. An hiſtorical deſcription, that enumerates all the qualities of any object, is certainly good, becauſe it is true; but may be as unaffecting as a logical definition. In poetry no unaffecting deſcription is good, however conformable to truth; for here we expect not a complete enumeration of qualities, (the chief end of the art being to pleaſe), but only ſuch an enumeration as may give a lively and intereſting idea. It is not memory, or the knowledge of rules, that can qualify a poet for this ſort of deſcription; but a peculiar livelineſs of fancy and ſenſibility of heart, the nature whereof we may explain by its effects, but we cannot lay down rules for the attainment of it.

When our mind is occupied by any emotion, we naturally uſe words, and meditate on things, that are ſuitable to it, and tend to encourage it. If a man were to write a letter when he is very angry, there would probably be ſomething of vehemence or bitterneſs in the ſtyle, even though the perſon to whom he wrote were not the object of

of his anger. The ſame thing holds true of every other ſtrong paſſion or emotion: — while it predominates in the mind, it gives a peculiarity to our thoughts, as well as to our voice, geſture, and countenance: and hence we expect, that every perſonage introduced in poetry ſhould ſee things through the medium of his ruling paſſion, and that his thoughts and language ſhould be tinctured accordingly. A melancholy man walking in a grove, attends to thoſe things that ſuit and encourage his melancholy; the ſighing of the wind in the trees, the murmuring of waters, the darkneſs and ſolitude of the ſhades: a chearful man in the ſame place, finds many ſubjects of chearful meditation, in the ſinging of birds, the briſk motions of the babling ſtream, and the livelineſs and variety of the verdure. Perſons of different characters, contemplating the ſame thing, a Roman triumph, for inſtance, feel different emotions, and turn their view to different objects. One is filled with wonder at ſuch a diſplay of wealth and power; another exults in the idea of conqueſt, and pants for military renown; a third, ſtunned with clamour, and haraſſed with confuſion, wiſhes for ſilence, ſecurity, and ſolitude; one melts with pity to the vanquiſhed, and makes many a ſad reflection upon the inſignificance of worldly grandeur, and the uncertainty of human things; while the buffoon, and perhaps the philoſopher, conſiders the whole as a vain

piece

piece of pageantry, which, by its ſolemn procedure, and by the admiration of ſo many people, is only rendered the more ridiculous: — and each of theſe perſons would deſcribe it in a way ſuitable to his own feelings, and tending to raiſe the ſame in others. We ſee in Milton's Allegro and Penſeroſo, how a different caſt of mind produces a variety in the manner of conceiving and contemplating the ſame rural ſcenery. In the former of theſe excellent poems, the author perſonates a chearful man, and takes notice of thoſe things in external nature that are ſuitable to chearful thoughts, and tend to encourage them; in the latter, every object deſcribed is ſerious and ſolemn, and productive of calm reflection and tender melancholy: and I ſhould not be eaſily perſuaded, that Milton wrote the firſt under the influence of ſorrow, or the ſecond under that of gladneſs. — We often ſee an author's character in his works; and if every author were in earneſt when he writes, we ſhould oftener ſee it. Thomſon was a man of piety and benevolence, and a warm admirer of the beauties of nature; and every deſcription in his delightful poem on the Seaſons tends to raiſe the ſame laudable affections in his reader. The parts of nature that attract his notice are thoſe which an impious or hardhearted man would neither attend to nor be affected with, at leaſt in the ſame manner. In Swift we ſee a turn of mind very different

different from that of the amiable Thomſon; little reliſh for the ſublime or beautiful, and a perpetual ſucceſſion of violent emotions. All his pictures of human life ſeem to ſhow, that deformity and meanneſs were the favourite objects of his attention, and that his ſoul was a conſtant prey to indignation *, diſguſt, and other gloomy paſſions ariſing from ſuch a view of things. And it is the tendency of almoſt all his writings (though it was not always the author's deſign) to communicate the ſame paſſions to his reader: inſomuch, that, notwithſtanding his erudition, and knowledge of the world, his abilities as a popular orator and man of buſineſs, the energy of his ſtyle, the elegance of ſome of his verſes, and his extraordinary talents in wit and humour, there is reaſon to doubt, whether by ſtudying his works any perſon was ever much improved in piety or benevolence.

And thus we ſee, how the compoſitions of an ingenious author may operate upon the heart, whatever be the ſubject. The affections that prevail in the author himſelf direct his attention to objects congenial, and give a peculiar bias to his inventive powers, and a peculiar colour to his language. Hence

* For part of this remark we have his own authority, often in his letters, and very explicitly in the Latin Epitaph which he compoſed for himſelf: — "ubi ſæva "indignatio ulterius cor lacerare nequit." *See his laſt will and teſtament.*

his

his work, as well as face, if Nature is permitted to exert herſelf freely in it, will exhibit a picture of his mind, and awaken correſpondent ſympathies in the reader. When theſe are favourable to virtue, which they always ought to be, the work will have that *ſweet pathos* which Horace alludes to in the paſſage above mentioned; and which we ſo highly admire, and ſo warmly approve, even in thoſe parts of the Georgic that deſcribe inanimate nature.

Horace's account of the matter in queſtion differs not from what is here given. "It is not enough," ſays he, "that poems "be beautiful; let them be affecting, and "agitate the mind with whatever paſſions "the poet wiſhes to impart. The human "countenance, as it ſmiles on thoſe who "ſmile, accompanies alſo with ſympathetic "tears thoſe who mourn. If you would "have me weep, you muſt firſt weep your-"ſelf; then, and not before, ſhall I be "touched with your misfortunes.—For na-"ture *firſt* makes the emotions of our mind "correſpond with our circumſtances, infu-"ſing real joy, ſorrow, or reſentment, ac-"cording to the occaſion; and *afterwards* "gives the true pathetic utterance to the "voice and language *." —This doctrine, which concerns the orator and the player no leſs than the poet, is ſtrictly philoſophical,

*. Ar. Poet. verſ. 99.—111.

and equally applicable to dramatic, to deſcriptive, and indeed to every ſpecies of intereſting poetry. The poet's ſenſibility muſt firſt of all engage him warmly in his ſubject, and in every part of it; otherwiſe he will labour in vain to intereſt the reader. If he would paint external nature, as Virgil and Thomſon have done, ſo as to make her amiable to others, he muſt firſt be enamoured of her himſelf; if he would have his heroes and heroines ſpeak the language of love or ſorrow, devotion or courage, ambition or anger, benevolence or pity, his heart muſt be ſuſceptible of thoſe emotions, and in ſome degree feel them, as long at leaſt as he employs himſelf in framing words for them; being aſſured, that

He beſt ſhall paint them who can feel them moſt *.

The true poet, therefore, muſt not only ſtudy nature, and know the reality of things; but muſt alſo poſſeſs fancy, to invent additional decorations; judgement, to direct him in the choice of ſuch as accord with veriſimilitude; and ſenſibility, to enter with ardent emotions into every part of his ſubject, ſo as to transfuſe into his work a pathos and energy ſufficient to raiſe correſponding emotions in the reader.

"The hiſtorian and the poet," ſays Ari-

* Pope's Eloiſa, verſ. 366.

ſtotle, " differ in this, that the former exhi-
" bits things as they are, the latter as they
" might be *:" — I ſuppoſe he means, in that ſtate of perfection which is conſiſtent with probability, and in which, for the ſake of our own gratification, we wiſh to find them. If the poet, after all the liberties he is allowed to take with the truth, can produce nothing more exquiſite than is commonly to be met with in hiſtory, his reader will be diſappointed and diſſatisfied. Poetical repreſentations muſt therefore be framed after a pattern of the higheſt probable perfection that the genius of the work will admit: — external nature muſt in them be more pictureſque than in reality; action more animated; ſentiments more expreſſive of the feelings and character, and more ſuitable to the circumſtances of the ſpeaker; perſonages better accompliſhed in thoſe qualities that raiſe admiration, pity, terror, and other ardent emotions; and events, more compact, more clearly connected with cauſes and conſequences, and unfolded in an order more flattering to the fancy, and more intereſting to the paſſions. But where, it may be ſaid, is this pattern of perfection to be found? Not in real nature; otherwiſe hiſtory, which delineates real nature, would alſo delineate this pattern of perfection. It is to be found only in the mind of the poet;

* Poetic. ſect. 9.

and

and it is imagination, regulated by knowledge, that enables him to form it.

In the beginning of life, and while experience is confined to a ſmall circle, we admire every thing, and are pleaſed with very moderate excellence. A peaſant thinks the hall of his landlord the fineſt apartment in the univerſe, liſtens with rapture to the ſtrolling ballad-ſinger, and wonders at the rude wooden cuts that adorn his ruder compoſitions. A child looks upon his native village as a town; upon the brook that runs by, as a river; and upon the meadows and hills in the neighbourhood, as the moſt ſpacious and beautiful that can be. But when, after long abſence, he returns in his declining years, to viſit, once before he die, the dear ſpot that gave him birth, and thoſe ſcenes whereof he remembers rather the original charms than the exact proportions, how is he diſappointed to find every thing ſo debaſed, and ſo diminiſhed! The hills ſeem to have ſunk into the ground, the brook to be dried up, and the village to be forſaken of its people; the pariſh-church, ſtripped of all its fancied magnificence, is become low, gloomy, and narrow, and the fields are now only the miniature of what they were. Had he never left this ſpot, his notions might have remained the ſame as at firſt; and had he travelled but a little way from it, they would not perhaps have received any material enlargement. It ſeems then to be from

obſervation of many things of the ſame or ſimilar kinds, that we acquire the talent of forming ideas more perfect than the real objects that lie immediately around us: and theſe ideas we may improve gradually more and more, according to the vivacity of our mind, and extent of our experience, till at laſt we come to raiſe them to a degree of perfection ſuperior to any thing to be found in real life. There cannot, ſure, be any myſtery in this doctrine; for we think and ſpeak to the ſame purpoſe every day. Thus nothing is more common than to ſay, that ſuch an artiſt excels all we have ever known in his profeſſion, and yet that we can ſtill conceive a ſuperior performance. A moraliſt, by bringing together into one view the ſeparate virtues of many perſons, is enabled to lay down a ſyſtem of duty more perfect than any he has ever ſeen exemplified in human conduct. Whatever be the emotion the poet intends to raiſe in his reader, whether admiration or terror, joy or ſorrow; and whatever be the object he would exhibit, whether Venus or Tiſiphone, Achilles or Therſites, a palace or a pile of ruins, a dance or a battle; he generally copies an idea of his own imagination; conſidering each quality as it is found to exiſt in ſeveral individuals of a ſpecies, and thence forming an aſſemblage more or leſs perfect in its kind, according to the purpoſe to which he means to apply it.

Hence

Hence it would appear, that the ideas of Poetry are rather general than ſingular; rather collected from the examination of a ſpecies or claſs of things, than copied from an individual. And this, according to Ariſtotle, is in fact the caſe, at leaſt for the moſt part; whence that critic determines, that Poetry is ſomething more exquiſite and more philoſophical than hiſtory *. The hiſtorian may deſcribe Bucephalus, but the poet delineates a war-horſe; the former muſt have ſeen the animal he ſpeaks of, or received authentic information concerning it, if he mean to deſcribe it hiſtorically; for the latter it is enough that he has ſeen ſeveral animals of that ſort. The former tells us, what Alcibiades actually did and ſaid; the latter, what ſuch a ſpecies of human character as that which bears the name of Achilles would probably do or ſay in certain given circumſtances.

It is indeed true, that the poet may, and often does, copy after individual objects. Homer, no doubt, took his characters from the life; or at leaſt, in forming them, was careful to follow tradition as far as the nature of his plan would allow. But he probably took the freedom to add or heighten ſome qualities, and take away others; to make Achilles, for example, ſtronger, perhaps, and more impetuous, and more emi-

* Poetic. ſect. 9.

nent

nent for filial affection, and Hector more patriotic and more amiable, than he really was. If he had not done this, or something like it, his work would have been rather a history than a poem; would have exhibited men and things as they were, and not as they might have been; and Achilles and Hector would have been the names of individual and real heroes; whereas, according to Aristotle, they are rather to be considered as two distinct modifications or species of the heroic character. —— Shakespeare's account of the cliffs of Dover comes so near the truth, that we cannot doubt of its having been written by one who had seen them: but he who takes it for an exact historical description, will be surprised when he comes to the place, and finds those cliffs not half so lofty as the poet had made him believe. An historian would be to blame for such amplification; because, being to describe an individual precipice, he ought to tell us just what it is; which if he did, the description would suit that place, and perhaps no other in the whole world. But the poet means only to give an idea of what such a precipice may be; and therefore his description may perhaps be equally applicable to many such chalky precipices on the sea-shore.

This method of copying after general ideas formed by the artist from observation of many individuals, distinguishes the Italian, and all the sublime painters, from the Dutch, and their

their imitators. Theſe give us bare nature, with the imperfections and peculiarities of individual things or perſons; but thoſe give nature improved as far as probability and the deſign of the piece will admit. Teniers and Hogarth draw faces, and figures, and dreſſes, from real life, and preſent manners; and therefore their pieces muſt in ſome degree loſe the effect, and become aukward, when the preſent faſhions become obſolete. — Raphael and Reynolds take their models from general nature; avoiding, as far as poſſible, (at leaſt in all their great performances), thoſe peculiarities that derive their beauty from mere faſhion; and therefore their works muſt give pleaſure, and appear elegant, as long as men are capable of forming general ideas, and of judging from them. The laſt-mentioned incomparable artiſt is particularly obſervant of children, whoſe looks and attitudes, being leſs under the control of art and local manners, are more characteriſtical of the ſpecies, than thoſe of men and women. This field of obſervation has ſupplied him with many fine figures, particularly that moſt exquiſite one of Comedy, ſtruggling for and winning (for who could reſiſt her!) the affections of Garrick: — a figure which could never have occurred to the imagination of a painter who had confined his views to grown perſons looking and moving in all the formality of polite life: — a figure which in all ages and countries would be pronounced

ced natural and engaging; — whereas thoſe human forms that we ſee every day bowing, and courteſying, and ſtrutting, and turning out their toes, *ſecundum artem*, and dreſſed in ruffles, and wigs, and flounces, and hoop-petticoats, and full-trimmed ſuits, would appear elegant no further than the preſent faſhions are propagated, and no longer than they remain unaltered.

I have heard it diſputed, whether a portrait ought to be habited according to the faſhion of the times, or in one of thoſe dreſſes which, on account of their elegance, or having been long in uſe, are affected by great painters, and therefore called pictureſque. The queſtion may be determined upon the principles here laid down. If you wiſh to have a portrait of your friend, that ſhall always be elegant, and never aukward, chuſe a pictureſque dreſs. But if you mean to preſerve the remembrance of a particular ſuit of cloaths, without minding the ridiculous figure which your friend will probably cut in it a hundred years hence, you may array his picture according to the faſhion. The hiſtory of dreſſes may be worth preſerving: but who would have his image ſet up, for the purpoſe of hanging a coat or periwig upon it, to gratify the curioſity of antiquarian tailors or wigmakers?

There is, in the progreſs of human ſociety, as well as of human life, a period to which it is of great importance for the

higher order of poets to attend, and from which they will do well to take their characters, and manners, and the era of their events; I mean, that wherein men are raiſed above ſavage life, and conſiderably improved by arts, government, and converſation; but not advanced ſo high in the aſcent towards politeneſs, as to have acquired a habit of diſguiſing their thoughts and paſſions, and of reducing their behaviour to the uniformity of the mode. Such was the period which Homer had the good fortune (as a poet) to live in, and to celebrate. This is the period at which the manners of men are moſt pictureſque, and their adventures moſt romantic. This is the period when the appetites, unperverted by luxury, the powers unenervated by effeminacy, and the thoughts diſengaged from artificial reſtraint, will, in perſons of ſimilar diſpoſitions and circumſtances, operate in nearly the ſame way; and when, conſequently, the characters of particular men will approach to the nature of poetical or general ideas, and, if well imitated, give pleaſure to the whole, or at leaſt to a great majority of mankind. But a character tinctured with the faſhions of polite life would not be ſo generally intereſting. Like a human figure adjuſted by a modern dancing-maſter, and dreſſed by a modern tailor, it may have a good effect in ſatire, comedy, or farce; but if introduced into the higher poetry, it would be admired by

thoſe only who had learned to admire nothing but preſent faſhions, and by them no longer than the preſent faſhions laſted; and to all the reſt of the world would appear awkward, unaffecting, and perhaps ridiculous. But Achilles and Sarpedon, Diomede and Hector, Neſtor and Ulyſſes, as drawn by Homer, muſt in all ages, independently on faſhion, command the attention and admiration of mankind. Theſe have the qualities that are univerſally known to belong to human nature; whereas the modern fine gentleman is diſtinguiſhed by qualities that belong only to a particular age, ſociety, and corner of the world. I ſpeak not of moral or intellectual virtues, which are objects of admiration to every age; but of thoſe outward accompliſhments, and that particular temperature of the paſſions, which form the moſt perceptible part of a human character. —— As, therefore, the politician, in diſcuſſing the rights of mankind, muſt often allude to an imaginary ſtate of nature; ſo the poet who intends to raiſe admiration, pity, terror, and other important emotions, in the generality of mankind, eſpecially in thoſe readers whoſe minds are moſt improved, muſt take his pictures of life and manners, rather from the heroic period we now ſpeak of, than from the ages of refinement; and muſt therefore (to repeat the maxim of Ariſtotle) "exhibit things, not as they are, "but as they might be."

If,

If, then, there be any nations who entertain ſuch a partiality in favour of one ſyſtem of artificial manners, that they cannot endure any other ſyſtem, either artificial or natural; may we not fairly conclude, that in thoſe nations Epic poetry will not flouriſh? How far this may account for any peculiarities in the taſte and literature of a neighbouring nation *, is ſubmitted to the reader. —— Were a man ſo perverted by nature, or by habit, as to think no ſtate of the human body graceful, but what depends on lace and fringe, powder and pomatum, buckram and whalebone, I ſhould not wonder, if he beheld with diſſatisfaction the naked majeſty of the Apollo Belvidere, or the flowing ſimplicity of robe that arrays a Cicero or Flora. But if one of his favourite figures were to be carried about the world in company with theſe ſtatues, I believe the general voice of mankind would not ratify his judgement. Homer's ſimple manners may diſguſt a Terraſſon, or a Cheſterfield; but will always pleaſe the univerſal taſte, becauſe they are more picturesque in themſelves, than any form of artificial manners can be,

* Je me ſouviens, que lorſque je conſultai, ſur ma Henriade, feu M. de Malezieux, homme qui joignait une grande imagination à une litterature immenſe, il me dit: Vous enterprenez un ouvrage qui n'eſt pas fait pour notre nation; LES FRANÇAIS N'ONT PAS LA TETE EPIQUE.

Voltaire. Eſſai ſur la poeſie epique, chap. 9.

and more ſuitable to thoſe ideas of human life which are moſt familiar to the human mind.

Let it not be thought, that I have any partiality to the tenets of thoſe philoſophers who recommend the manners of the heroic period, or even of the ſavage ſtate, as better in a moral view, than thoſe of our own time; or that I mean any reflection upon the virtue or good ſenſe of the age, when I ſpeak diſreſpectfully of ſome faſhionable articles of external decoration. Our dreſs and attitudes are not perhaps ſo graceful as they might be: but that is not our fault, for it depends on cauſes which are not in our power: — that affects not the virtue of any good man, and no degree of outward elegance will ever reform the heart of a bad one: and that is no more a proof of our ill taſte, than the roughneſs of our language, or the coldneſs of our climate. As a moraliſt, one would eſtimate the things of this life by their influence on the next; but I here ſpeak as a critic, and judge of things according to their effects in the fine arts. Poetry, as an inſtrument of pleaſure, gives the preference to thoſe things that have moſt variety, and operate moſt powerfully on the paſſions; and, as an art that conveys inſtruction rather by example than by precept, muſt exhibit evil as well as good, and vitious as well as virtuous characters. That ſavages, and heroes like thoſe of Homer, may ſleep ſounder;

er; and eat and drink, and perhaps fight, with a keener appetite, than modern Europeans; that they may excel us in ſtrength, ſwiftneſs, and many ſorts of manual dexterity; in a word, that they may be *finer animals* than we; and further, that, being ſubject to fewer reſtraints both from virtue and from delicacy, they may diſplay a more animated picture of the undiſguiſed energies of the human ſoul, I am very willing to allow: but I hold, that the manners of poliſhed life are beyond compariſon more favourable to that benevolence, piety, and ſelf-government, which are the glory of the Chriſtian character, and the higheſt perfection of our nature, as rational and immortal beings. The former ſtate of mankind I would therefore prefer as the beſt ſubject of Epic and Tragic Poetry: but for ſupplying the means of real happineſs here, and of eternal felicity hereafter, every man of reflection, unleſs blinded by hypotheſis, or by prejudice, muſt give the preference to the latter.

CHAP-

CHAP. IV.

The ſubject continued. Of Poetical Characters.

HORACE ſeems to think, that a competent knowledge of moral philoſophy will fit an author for aſſigning the ſuitable qualities and duties to each poetical perſonage *. The maxim may be true, as far as mere morality is the aim of the poet; but cannot be underſtood to refer to the delineation of poetical characters in general: for a thorough acquaintance with all the moral philoſophy in the world would not have enabled Blackmore to paint ſuch a perſonage as Homer's Achilles, Shakeſpeare's Othello, or the Satan of Paradiſe Loſt. To a competency of moral ſcience, there muſt be added an extenſive knowledge of mankind, a warm and elevated imagination, and the greateſt ſenſibility of heart, before a genius can be formed equal to ſo difficult a taſk. Horace is indeed ſo ſenſible of the danger of introducing a new character in poetry, that he even diſcourages the attempt, and adviſes the poet

* Hor. Ar. Poet. verſ. 309. — 316.

rather

rather to take his perſons from the ancient authors, or from tradition *.

To conceive the idea of a good man, and to invent and ſupport a great poetical character, are two very different things, however they may ſeem to have been confounded by ſome late critics. The firſt is eaſy to any perſon ſufficiently inſtructed in the duties of life; the laſt is perhaps of all the efforts of human genius the moſt difficult; ſo very difficult, that, though attempted by many, Homer, Shakeſpeare, and Milton, are almoſt the only authors who have ſucceeded in it. But characters of perfect virtue are not the moſt proper for poetry. It ſeems to be agreed, that the Deity ſhould not be introduced in the machinery of a poetical fable. To aſcribe to him words and actions of our own invention, is in my judgement very unbecoming; nor can a poetical deſcription, that is known to be, and muſt of neceſſity be, infinitely inadequate, ever ſatisfy the human mind †. Poetry, according to the

* Hor. Ar. Poet. verſ. 119. — 130.

† It is ſomewhat amuſing to obſerve, what different ideas our poets have entertained of the manner of ſpeaking that may be moſt ſuitable to the Divine Nature. Milton aſcribes to him that mode of reaſoning which in his own age was thought to be the moſt ſacred and moſt important. Cowley, in his *Davideis*, introduces the Deity ſpeaking in the Alexandrine meaſure; from an opinion, no doubt, that a line of ſix feet has more dignity

the beſt critics, is an imitation of human action; and therefore poetical characters, though elevated, ſhould ſtill partake of the paſſions and frailties of humanity. If it were not for the vices of ſome principal perſonages, the Iliad would not be either ſo intereſting or ſo moral: — the moſt moving and moſt eventful parts of the Æneid are thoſe that deſcribe the effects of unlawful paſſion *: — the

nity than one of five. Brown, on the contrary, in *The Cure of Saul*, ſuppoſes him to ſpeak in rhyming verſes of three ſyllables. And the author of *Pre-exiſtence, a Poem*, in Dodſley's Collection, thinks it more congruous, that the Supreme Being ſhould "ſet wide the fate of "things," in a ſpeech "majeſtically long, repugnant to "all princes cuſtoms here," &c.

* The deſtruction of Troy, the war with Turnus, and the deſpair and death of Dido, are here alluded to. That the firſt was owing to criminal paſſion, is well known. On the fate of Turnus and Dido, I beg leave to offer a few remarks.

1. Turnus is a brave and gallant young prince: but his diſobedience to the will of Jupiter, as repeatedly declared by oracles and prodigies whereof he could not miſunderſtand the meaning, (*Æneid*, vii. *verſ.* 104. & 596.), in perſiſting to urge his claim to Lavinia, whom Fate had deſtined to be the wife of his rival, engages him in the war which concludes with his death. We pity his fall, of which, however, himſelf, with his dying breath, acknowledges the juſtice. Had he been leſs amiable, we ſhould have been leſs intereſted in his fate; had he been more virtuous, the poet muſt either have omitted the Italian war altogether, or brought it about by means leſs probable perhaps, and leſs honourable to the Trojans, and conſequently to Rome. Piety to the gods is every where recommended by Virgil as the firſt

the moſt inſtructive tragedy in the world, I mean Macbeth, is founded in crimes of dreadful

and greateſt human virtue, to which all other duties and all other affections are to give place, when they happen to be inconſiſtent.

2. The loves of Eneas and Dido are criminal on both ſides. By connecting himſelf with this unfortune queen, with whom he knew that he could not, without diſobedience to the will of Heaven, remain, he is guilty, not only of impiety, but alſo of a temporary neglect of duty to his people as their leader and ſovereign: and ſhe, in obtruding herſelf upon the Trojan prince, violates the moſt ſolemn vows, and acts a part of which ſhe could not be ignorant, that it was incompatible with his deſtiny; for he had told her from the firſt, that he was appointed by Fate to ſettle his Trojans in Italy, and to marry a wife of that country. *Æneid.* ii. 781. —— Dido has many great and many amiable qualities: yet the Poet blends in her character ſome harſh ingredients; with a view, no doubt, partly to reconcile us in ſome meaſure to her ſad cataſtrophe, but chiefly to make her appear in the eyes of his countrymen an adequate repreſentative of that people, who had ſo long been the object of their jealouſy and hatred. Her paſſion for Eneas is diſreſpectful to the gods, injurious to that prince and his followers, and indecent in itſelf: ſhe is ſomewhat libertine in her religious principles; a ſhocking circumſtance in a lady, and which to our pious poet muſt have been peculiarly offenſive: and her behaviour, when Eneas is going to leave her, though ſuitable to a haughty princeſs under the power of a paſſion more violent than delicate, is not at all what we ſhould expect from that ſoftneſs of nature, and gentleneſs of affection, without which no woman can be truly amiable. If we except her wiſh for a young Eneas, there is hardly one ſentiment of feminine tenderneſs, in all her threats, complaints, and expoſtulations. Pride, ſelf-condemnation, and revenge, engroſs her whole ſoul, and extinguiſh every other thought; and ſhe concludes her life, by imprecating, with cool,

dreadful enormity: —and if Milton had not taken into his plan the fall of our firſt parents,

but dreadful ſolemnity, perdition upon the fugitive Trojan, and miſery upon his people, and their deſcendents, for ever.

Virgil has been blamed for ſome things in the conduct of this part of the poem; I know not with what good reaſon He was not obliged to give moral perfection to his characters. That of Æneas, if it had been leſs perfect, might perhaps have made the poem more animated; but then it would not have ſuited the poet's main deſign of reconciling the Romans to the perſon and government of Auguſtus, of whom Eneas is to be conſidered as the poetical type. This hero does indeed, in attaching himſelf to Dido, act inconſiſtently with his pious and patriotic character; but his fault is human, and not without circumſtances of alleviation: and we muſt not eſtimate the morality of an action by its conſequences, except where they might have been foreſeen. But he is no ſooner reprimanded by Mercury for his tranſgreſſion, than he returns to his duty, notwithſtanding his liking to the country, and his love for the lady, which now ſeems to be more delicate, than hers for him. —— But is not Dido's fault alſo human, and attended alſo with alleviating circumſtances? — and if ſo, is not her puniſhment greater than her crime? — Granting all this, it will not follow, that Virgil is to blame. Poetry, if ſtrict retributive juſtice were always to be expected in it, would not be an imitation of human life; and, as all its great events would be anticipated, and exactly ſuch as we wiſh for, could melt or ſurpriſe us no longer. In fact, unlawful love has, in every age, been attended with worſe conſequences to the weaker, than to the ſtronger ſex; not becauſe it is leſs unlawful in the one than in the other; but that the former may be guarded by the ſtrongeſt motives of intereſt, as well as of honour and duty; and the latter reſtrained by every principle, not only of conſcience, but alſo of generoſity and compaſſion. Our poet aſſigns to Dido, in the ſhades below, one of the leaſt

rents, as well as their ſtate of innocence, his divine poem muſt have wanted much of its

leaſt uncomfortable ſituations in the *region of mourning*; from whence, according to his ſyſtem, (ſee the *Eſſay on Truth*, part 3. chap. 2.) after undergoing the neceſſary pains of purification, ſhe was to paſs into Elyſium, and enjoy the pleaſures of that happy place for a thouſand years; and afterwards to be ſent back to earth to animate another body, and thus have another opportunity of riſing to virtue and happineſs by a ſuitable behaviour.

Thoſe incidents, and thoſe only, are blameable in a poem, which either hurt the main deſign, or are in themſelves unnatural, inſipid, or immoral. The epiſode of Dido, as Virgil has given it, is perfectly conſonant with his main deſign; for it ſets his hero in a new light, and raiſes our idea of his perſonal accompliſhments; and muſt have been particularly intereſting to the Romans, as it accounts for their jealouſy of Carthage, one of the moſt important events in all their hiſtory. Unnatural or inſipid this epiſode cannot be called; for it is without doubt the fineſt piece of poetry in the world: the whole deſcription of Dido's love, in every period of its progreſs, from its commencement to its lamentable concluſion, is ſublime, and harmonious, natural, pathetic, and picturesque, to a degree which was never equalled, and never can be ſurpaſſed. And who will object to the morality of that fable, which recommends piety and patriotiſm as the moſt indiſpenſable duties of a ſovereign; and paints, in the moſt terrifying colours, the fatal effects of female imprudence, of oppoſition to the will of Heaven, of the violation of ſolemn vows, and the gratification of criminal deſires?

As to the part that Venus and Juno take in this affair, againſt which I have heard ſome people exclaim; — it is to be conſidered as a poetical figure, of ſufficient probabilty in the days of Virgil; and only ſignifies, that Dido was enſnared in this unhappy amour, firſt by her love, and then by her ambition. See her conference with her ſiſter in the beginning of the fourth book. — The reader who loves Virgil as much as I wiſh him to do, will not be offended at the length of this note.

pathos, and could not have been (what it now is) such a treasure of important knowledge, as no other uninspired writer ever comprehended in so small a compass. —— Virtue, like truth, is uniform and unchangeable. We may anticipate the part a good man will act in any given circumstances; and therefore the events that depend on such a man must be less surprising than those that proceed from passion; the vicissitudes whereof it is frequently impossible to foresee. From the violent temper of Achilles, in the Iliad, spring many great incidents; which could not have taken place, if he had been calm and prudent like Ulysses, or pious and patriotic like Eneas: — his rejection of Agamemnon's offers, in the ninth book, arises from the violence of his resentment; — his yielding to the request of Patroclus, in the sixteenth, from the violence of his friendship (if I may so speak) counteracting his resentment; and his restoring to Priam the dead body of Hector, in the twenty-fourth, from the violence of his affection to his own aged father, and his regard to the command of Jupiter, counteracting, in some measure, both his sorrow for his friend, and his thirst of vengeance. —— Besides, except where there is some degree of vice, it pains us too exquisitely to see misfortune; and therefore Poetry would cease to have a pleasurable influence over our tender passions, if it were to exhibit virtuous characters only. And as, in

in life, evil is neceſſary to our moral probation, and the poſſibility of error to our intellectual improvement; ſo bad or mixed characters are uſeful in poetry, to give to the good ſuch oppoſition as puts them upon diſplaying and exerciſing their virtue.

All thoſe perſonages, however, in whoſe fortune the poet means that we ſhould be intereſted, muſt have agreeable and admirable qualities to recommend them to our regard. And perhaps the greateſt difficulty in the art lies in ſuitably blending thoſe faults, which the poet finds it expedient to give to any particular hero, with ſuch moral, intellectual, or corporeal accompliſhments, as may engage our eſteem, pity, or admiration, without weakening our hatred of vice, or love of virtue. In moſt of our novels, and in many of our plays, it happens unluckily, that the hero of the piece is ſo captivating, as to incline us to be indulgent to every part of his character, the bad as well as the good. But a great maſter knows how to give the proper direction to human ſenſibility, and, without any perverſion of our faculties, or any confuſion of right and wrong, to make the ſame perſon the object of very different emotions, of pity and hatred, of admiration and horror. Who does not eſteem and admire Macbeth, for his courage and generoſity? who does not pity him when beſet with all the terrors of a pregnant imagination, ſuperſtitious temper, and awakened

awakened conſcience? who does not abhor him as a monſter of cruelty, treachery, and ingratitude? His good qualities, by drawing us near to him, make us, as it were, eye-witneſſes of his crime, and give us a fellow-feeling of his remorſe; and, therefore, his example cannot fail to have a powerful effect in cheriſhing our love of virtue, and fortifying our minds againſt criminal impreſſions: whereas, had he wanted thoſe good qualities, we ſhould have kept aloof from his concerns, or viewed them with a ſuperficial attention; in which caſe his example would have had little more weight, than that of the robber, of whom we know nothing, but that he was tried, condemned, and executed.—Satan, in Paradiſe Loſt, is a character drawn and ſupported with the moſt conſummate judgement. The old furies and demons, Hecate, Tiſiphone, Alecto, Megara, are objects of unmixed and unmitigated abhorrence; Tityus, Enceladus, and their brethren, are remarkable for nothing but impiety, deformity, and vaſtneſs of ſize; Pluto is, at beſt, an inſipid perſonage; Mars, a hairbrained ruffian; Taſſo's infernal tyrant, an ugly and overgrown monſter:—but in the Miltonic Satan, we are forced to admire the majeſty of the ruined archangel, at the ſame time that we deteſt the unconquerable depravity of the fiend. But, of all poetical characters, the Achilles

of

of Homer * ſeems to me the moſt exquiſite in the invention, and the moſt highly finiſhed. The utility of this character in a moral view is obvious; for it may be conſidered as the ſource of all the morality of the Iliad. Had not the generous and violent temper of Achilles determined him to patroniſe the augur Calchas in defiance of Agamemnon, and afterwards, on being affronted by that vindictive commander, to abandon for a time the common cauſe of Greece; — the fatal effects of diſſenſion among confederates, and of capricious and tyrannical behaviour in a ſovereign, would not have been the leading moral of Homer's poetry; nor could Hector, Sarpedon, Eneas, Ulyſſes, and the other amiable heroes, have been brought forward to ſignalize their virtues, and recommend themſelves to the eſteem and imitation of mankind.

They who form their judgement of Achilles from the imperfect ſketch given of him

* I ſay, the Achilles of Homer. Latter authors have degraded the character of this hero, by ſuppoſing every part of his body invulnerable except the heel. I know not how often I have heard this urged as one of Homer's abſurdities; and indeed the whole Iliad is one continued abſurdity, on this ſuppoſition. But Homer all along makes his hero equally liable to wounds and death with other men. Nay, to prevent all miſtakes in regard to this matter, (if thoſe who cavil at the poet would but read his work), he actually wounds him in the right arm, by the lance of Aſteropæus, in the battle near the river Scamander. See Il. xxi. verſ. 161. — 168.

by

by Horace in the *Art of Poetry* *; and conſider him only as a hateful compoſition of anger, revenge, fierceneſs, obſtinacy, and pride, can never enter into the views of Homer, nor be ſuitably affected with his narration. All theſe vices are no doubt, in ſome degree, combined in Achilles; but they are tempered with qualities of a different ſort, which render him a moſt intereſting character, and of courſe make the Iliad a moſt intereſting poem. Every reader abhors the faults of this hero; and yet, to an attentive reader of Homer, this hero muſt be the object of eſteem, admiration, and pity; for he has many good as well as bad affections, and is equally violent in all: — nor is he poſſeſſed of a ſingle vice or virtue, which the wonderful art of the poet has not made ſubſervient to the deſign of the poem, and to the progreſs and cataſtrophe of the action; ſo that the hero of the Iliad, conſidered as a poetical perſonage, is juſt what he ſhould be, neither greater nor leſs, neither worſe nor better. — He is every where diſtinguiſhed by an abhorrence of oppreſſion, by a liberal and elevated mind, by a paſſion for glory, and by a love of truth, freedom, and ſincerity. He is for the moſt part attentive to the duties of religion; and, except to thoſe who have injured him, courteous and kind: he is affectionate to his tu-

* verſ. 121. 122.

tor Phenix; and not only pities the misfortunes of his enemy Priam, but in the moſt ſoothing manner adminiſters to him the beſt conſolation that poor Homer's theology could furniſh. Though no admirer of the cauſe in which his evil deſtiny compels him to engage, he is warmly attached to his native land; and, ardent as he is in vengeance, he is equally ſo in love to his aged father Peleus, and to his friend Patroclus. He is not luxurious like Paris, nor clowniſh like Ajax; his accompliſhments are princely, and his amuſements worthy of a hero. Add to this, as an apology for the vehemence of his anger, that the affront he had received was (according to the manners of that age) of the moſt atrocious nature; and not only unprovoked, but ſuch as, on the part of Agamemnon, betrayed a brutal inſenſibility to merit, as well as a proud, ſelfiſh, ungrateful, and tyrannical diſpoſition. And though he is often inexcuſeably furious; yet it is but juſtice to remark, that he was not naturally cruel *; and that his wildeſt outrages were ſuch as in thoſe rude times might be expected from a violent man of invincible ſtrength and valour, when exaſperated by

* See Iliad xxi. 100. and xxiv. 485. — 673. —— In the firſt of theſe paſſages, Achilles himſelf declares, that before Patroclus was ſlain, he often ſpared the lives of his enemies, and took pleaſure in doing it. It is ſtrange that this ſhould be left out in Pope's Tranſlation.

injury, and frantic with ſorrow.——Our hero's claim to the admiration of mankind is indiſputable. Every part of his character is ſublime and aſtoniſhing. In his perſon, he is the ſtrongeſt, the ſwifteſt, and moſt beautiful of men: — this laſt circumſtance, however, occurs not to his own obſervation, being too trivial to attract the notice of ſo great a mind. The Fates had put it in his power, either to return home before the end of the war, or to remain at Troy: — if he choſe the former, he would enjoy tranquillity and happineſs in his own country to a good old age; if the latter, he muſt periſh in the bloom of his youth: — his affection to his father and native country, and his hatred to Agamemnon, ſtrongly urged him to the firſt; but a deſire to avenge the death of his friend determines him to accept the laſt, with all its conſequences. This at once diſplays the greatneſs of his fortitude, the warmth of his friendſhip, and the violence of his ſanguinary paſſions: and it is this that ſo often and ſo powerfully recommends him to the pity, as well as admiration, of the attentive reader.——But the magnanimity of this hero is ſuperior, not only to the fear of death, but alſo to prodigies, and thoſe too of the moſt tremendous import. I allude to the ſpeech of his horſe Xanthus, in the end of the nineteenth book, and to his behaviour on that occaſion; and I ſhall take the liberty to expatiate a little upon that incident, with

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a view to vindicate Homer, as well as to illuſtrate the character of Achilles.

The incident is marvellous, no doubt, and has been generally condemned even by the admirers of Homer; yet to me, who am no believer in the infallibility of the great poet, ſeems not only allowable, but uſeful and important. That this miracle has probability enough to warrant its admiſſion into Homer's poetry, is fully proved by Madame Dacier. It is the effect of Juno's power; which if we admit in other parts of the poem, we ought not to reject in this: and in the poetical hiſtory of Greece, and even in the civil hiſtory of Rome, there are ſimilar fables, which were once in no ſmall degree of credit. But neither M. Dacier, nor any other of the commentators, (ſo far as I know), has taken notice of the propriety of introducing it in this place, nor of its utility in raiſing our idea of the hero.——Patroclus was now ſlain; and Achilles, forgetting the injury he had received from Agamemnon, and frantic with revenge and ſorrow, was ruſhing to the battle, to ſatiate his fury upon Hector and the Trojans. This was the critical moment on which his future deſtiny depended. It was ſtill in his power to retire, and go home in peace to his beloved father and native land, with the certain proſpect of a long and happy, though inglorious, life: if he went forward to the battle, he might avenge his friend's death upon the enemy,

but his own muſt inevitably happen ſoon after. This was the decree of Fate concerning him, as he himſelf very well knew. But it would not be wonderful, if ſuch an impetuous ſpirit ſhould forget all this, during the preſent paroxyſm of his grief and rage. His horſe, therefore, miraculouſly gifted by Juno for that purpoſe, after expreſſing, in dumb ſhow, the deepeſt concern for his lord, opens his mouth, and in human ſpeech announces his approaching fate. The fear of death, and the fear of prodigies, are different things; and a brave man, though proof againſt the one, may yet be overcome by the other. "I have known a ſoldier (ſays "Addiſon) that has entered a breach, af-"frighted at his own ſhadow; and look "pale upon a little ſcratching at his door, "who the day before had marched up againſt "a battery of cannon *." But Achilles, of whom we already knew that he feared nothing human, now ſhows, what we had not as yet been informed of, and what muſt therefore heighten our idea of his fortitude, that he is not to be terrified or moved, by the view of certain deſtruction, or even by the moſt alarming prodigies. I ſhall quote Pope's Tranſlation, which in this place is equal, if not ſuperior, to the original.

Then ceas'd for ever, by the Furies tied,
His fateful voice. Th' intrepid chief replied,

* Spectator, Numb. 12.

With

With unabated rage: "So let it be!
Portents and prodigies are loſt on me.
I know my fate; — to die, to ſee no more
My much-loved parents, and my native ſhore.
Enough: — when Heaven ordains, I ſink in night.—
Now periſh, Troy." He ſaid, and ruſh'd to fight.

It is equally a proof of rich invention and exact judgement in Homer, that he mixes ſome good qualities in all his bad characters, and ſome degree of imperfection in almoſt all his good ones. —— Agamemnon, notwithſtanding his pride, is an able general, and a valiant man, and highly eſteemed as ſuch by the greater part of the army. —— Paris, though effeminate, and vain of his dreſs and perſon, is, however, good-natured, patient of reproof, not deſtitute of courage, and eminently ſkilled in muſic, and other fine arts. —— Ajax is a huge giant; fearleſs rather from inſenſibility to danger, and confidence in his maſſy arms, than from any nobler principle; boaſtful and rough; regardleſs of the gods, though not downright impious *: yet there is in his manner ſome-

* His natural bluntneſs appears in that ſhort, but famous addreſs, to Jupiter, in the nineteenth book, when a preternatural darkneſs hindered him from ſeeing either the enemy or his own people. The prayer ſeems to be the effect rather of vexation, than of piety or patriotiſm. Pope gives a more ſolemn turn to it, than either Homer's words, or the character of the ſpeaker, will juſtify.

——— Lord of earth and air!
O King, O Father, hear my humble prayer, &c.

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thing of frankneſs and blunt ſincerity, which entitle him to a ſhare in our eſteem; and he is ever ready to aſſiſt his countrymen, to whom he renders good ſervice on many a perilous emergency. —— The character of Helen, in ſpite of her faults, and of the many calamities whereof ſhe is the guilty cauſe, Homer has found means to recommend to our pity, and almoſt to our love; and this he does, without ſeeking to extenuate the crime of Paris, of which the moſt reſpectable perſonages in the poem are made to ſpeak with becoming abhorrence. She is ſo full of remorſe, ſo ready on every occaſion to condemn her paſt conduct, ſo affectionate to her friends, ſo willing to do juſtice to every body's merit, and withal ſo finely accompliſhed, that ſhe extorts our admiration, as well as that of the Trojan ſenators. —— Menelaus, though ſufficiently ſenſible of the injury he had received, is yet a man of moderation, clemency, and good-nature, a valiant ſoldier, and a moſt affectionate brother; but there is a daſh of vanity in his compoſition, and he entertains rather too high an opinion of his own abilities; yet never overlooks or undervalues the merit of others. —— Priam would claim unreſerved eſteem, as well as pity, if it were not for his inexcuſeable weakneſs, in gratifying the humour, and by indulgence abetting the crimes, of the moſt worthleſs of all his children, to the utter ruin of his people, family, and kingdom.

kingdom. Madame Dacier ſuppoſes, that he had loſt his authority, and was obliged to fall in with the politics of the times: but of this I find no evidence; on the contrary, he and his unworthy favourite Paris ſeem to have been the only perſons of diſtinction in Troy, who were averſe to the reſtoring of Helen. Priam's foible (if it can be called by ſo ſoft a name), however faulty, is not uncommon, and has often produced calamity both in private and public life. The ſcripture gives a memorable inſtance, in the hiſtory of the good old Eli. —— Sarpedon comes nearer a perfect character, than any other of Homer's heroes; but the part he has to act is ſhort. It is a character, which one could hardly have expected in thoſe rude times: A ſovereign prince, who conſiders himſelf as a magiſtrate ſet up by the people for the public good, and therefore bound in honour and gratitude to be himſelf their example, and ſtudy to excel as much in virtue, as in rank and authority. —— Hector is the favourite of every reader; and with good reaſon. To the trueſt valour he joins the moſt generous patriotiſm. He abominates the crime of Paris: but, not being able to prevent the war, he thinks it his duty to defend his country, and his father and ſovereign, to the laſt. He too, as well as Achilles, foreſees his own death; which heightens our compaſſion, and raiſes our idea of his magnanimity. In all the relations of private

private life, as a ſon, a father, a huſband, a brother, he is amiable in the higheſt degree; and he is diſtinguiſhed among all the heroes for tenderneſs of affection, gentleneſs of manners, and a pious regard to the duties of religion. One circumſtance of his character, ſtrongly expreſſive of a great and delicate mind, we learn from Helen's lamentation over his dead body, That he was almoſt the only perſon in Troy, who had always treated her with kindneſs, and never uttered one reproachful word to give her pain, nor heard others reproach her without blaming them for it. Some tendency to oſtentation (which however may be pardonable in a commander in chief), and temporary fits of timidity, are the only blemiſhes diſcoverable in this hero; whoſe portrait Homer appears to have drawn with an affectionate and peculiar attention. And it muſt convey a favourable idea of the good old bard, as well as of human nature, to reflect, that the ſame perſon who was loved and admired three thouſand years ago, as a pattern of heroic excellence and manly virtue, is ſtill an object of admiration and love to the moſt enlightened nations. This is one ſtriking proof, that, notwithſtanding the endleſs viciſſitude to which human affairs are liable, the underſtanding and moral ſentiments of men have continued nearly the ſame in all ages; and that the faculties whereby we diſtinguiſh truth and virtue are as really parts of our original nature, and as

little obnoxious to the caprice of fashion, as our love of life, our senses of seeing and hearing, or the appetites of hunger and thirst. Rectitude of moral principle, and a spirit of good-nature and humanity, are indeed eminently conspicuous in this wonderful poet; whose works, in whatever light we consider them, as a picture of past ages, as a treasure of moral wisdom, as a specimen of the power of human genius, or as an affecting and instructive display of the human mind, are truly inestimable.

By ascribing so many amiable qualities to Hector, and some others of the Trojans, the poet interests us in the fate of that people, notwithstanding our being continually kept in mind, that they are the injurious party. And by thus blending good and evil, virtue and frailty, in the composition of his characters, he makes them the more conformable to the real appearances of human nature, and more useful as examples for our improvement: and at the same time, without hurting verisimilitude, gives every necessary embellishment to particular parts of his poem, and variety, coherence, and animation, to the whole fable. And it may also be observed, that though several of his characters are complex, not one of them is made up of incompatible parts: all are natural and probable, and such as we think we have met with, or might have met with, in our intercourse with mankind.

From the ſame extenſive views of good and evil, in all their forms and combinations, Homer has been enabled to make each of his characters perfectly diſtinct in itſelf, and different from all the reſt; inſomuch that, before we come to the end of the Iliad, we are as well acquainted with his heroes, as with the faces and tempers of our moſt familiar friends. Virgil, by confining himſelf to a few general ideas of fidelity and fortitude, has made his ſubordinate heroes a very good ſort of people; but they are all the ſame, and we have no clear knowledge of any one of them. Achates is faithful, and Gyas is brave, and Cloanthus is brave; and this is all we can ſay of the matter *. We ſee theſe heroes at a diſtance, and have ſome

* I cannot, however, admit the opinion of thoſe who contend, that there is nothing of character in Virgil. Turnus is a good poetical character, but borrowed from Homer, being an Achilles in miniature. Mezentius is well drawn, and of the poet's own invention: — a tyrant, who, together with impiety, has contracted intolerable cruelty and pride; yet intrepid in the field, and graced with one amiable virtue, ſometimes found in very rugged minds, a tender affection to a moſt deſerving ſon. In the good old King Evander, we have a charming picture of ſimple manners, refined by erudition, and uncorrupted by luxury. Dido has been already analyſed. There is nothing, I think, in Camilla, which might not be expected in any female warrior; but the adventures of her early life are romantic and intereſting. The circumſtance of her being, when an infant, thrown acroſs a river, tied to a ſpear, is ſo very ſingular, that it would ſeem to have had a foundation in fact, or in tradition. Something ſimilar is related by Plutarch of King Pyrrhus.

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notion of their ſhape and ſize; but are not near enough to diſtinguiſh their features: and every face ſeems to exhibit the ſame faint and ambiguous appearance. But of Homer's heroes we know every particular that can be known. We eat, and drink, and talk, and fight with them: we ſee them in action, and out of it; in the field, and in their tents and houſes: — the very face of the country about Troy, we ſeem to be as well acquainted with, as if we had been there. Similar characters there are among theſe heroes, as there are ſimilar faces in every ſociety; but we never miſtake one for another. Neſtor and Ulyſſes are both wiſe, and both eloquent; but the wiſdom of the former ſeems to be the effect of experience; that of the latter, of genius: the eloquence of the one is ſweet and copious, but not always to the purpoſe, and apt to degenerate into ſtory-telling; that of the other is cloſe, emphatical, and perſuaſive, and accompanied with a peculiar modeſty and ſimplicity of manner. Homer's heroes are all valiant; yet each diſplays a modification of valour peculiar to himſelf. One is valiant from principle, another from conſtitution; one is raſh, another cautious; one is impetuous and headſtrong, another impetuous, but tractable; one is cruel, another merciful; one is inſolent and oſtentatious, another gentle and unaſſuming; one is vain of his perſon, another of his ſtrength, and a third of his family.

mily. —— It would be tedious to give a complete enumeration. Almoſt every ſpecies of the heroic character is to be found in Homer.

The Paradiſe Loſt, though truly Epic, cannot properly be called an Heroic poem; for the agents in it are not heroes, but beings of a higher order *. Of theſe the poet's plan did not admit the introduction of many; but moſt of thoſe whom he has introduced are well characteriſed. I have already ſpoken of his Satan, which is the higheſt imaginable ſpecies of the diabolical character. The inferior ſpecies are well diverſified, and in each variety diſtinctly marked: one is ſlothful, another avaricious, a third ſophiſtical, a fourth furious; and though all are impious, ſome are more outrageouſly and blaſphemouſly ſo, than others. —— Adam and Eve, in the ſtate of innocence, are characters well imagined, and well ſupported; and the different ſentiments ariſing from difference of ſex, are traced out with inimitable delicacy, and philoſophical propriety. After the fall, he makes them retain the ſame characters, without any other change than what the tranſition from innocence to guilt

* Samſon, in the *Agoniſtes*, is a ſpecies of the heroic character not to be found in Homer; diſtinctly marked, and admirably ſupported. And Delilah, in the ſame tragedy, is perhaps a more perfect model of an alluring, inſinuating, worthleſs woman, than any other to be met with in ancient or modern poetry.

might

might be ſuppoſed to produce: Adam has ſtill that pre-eminence in dignity, and Eve in lovelineſs, which we ſhould naturally look for in the father and mother of mankind. —— Of the bleſſed ſpirits, Raphael and Michael are well diſtinguiſhed; the one for affability, and peculiar good-will to the human race; the other for majeſty, but ſuch as commands veneration, rather than fear. —— We are ſorry to add, that Milton's attempt to ſoar ſtill higher, only ſhows, that he had already ſoared as high, as, without being "blaſted with exceſs of light," it is poſſible for the human imagination to riſe.

I have been led further into this ſubject of poetical characters than I intended to have gone, or than was neceſſary in the preſent inveſtigation. For I preſume, it was long ago abundantly evident; — that the end of Poetry is to pleaſe, and therefore that the moſt perfect poetry muſt be the moſt pleaſing; — that what is unnatural cannot give pleaſure, and therefore that poetry muſt be according to nature; — that it muſt be either according to real nature, or according to nature ſomewhat different from the reality; — that if, according to real nature, it would give no greater pleaſure than hiſtory, which is a tranſcript of real nature; — that greater pleaſure is, however, to be expected from it, becauſe we grant it ſuperior indulgence, in regard to fiction, and the choice of words; — and, conſequently, that poetry muſt be, not

not according to real nature, but according to nature improved to that degree, which is consistent with probability, and suitable to the poet's purpose *. —— And hence it is that we call Poetry, AN IMITATION OF NATURE. — For that which is properly termed *Imitation* has always in it something which is not in the original. If the prototype and transcript be exactly alike; if there be nothing in the one which is not in the other; we may call the latter a representation, a copy, a draught, or a picture, of the former; but we never call it an imitation.

* Cum mundus sensibilis sit anima rationali dignitate inferior, videtur Poesis hæc humanæ naturæ largiri quæ historia denegat; atque animo umbris rerum utcunque satisfacere, cum solida haberi non possint. Si quis enim rem acutius introspiciat, firmum ex Poesi sumitur argumentum, magnitudinem rerum magis illustrem, ordinem magis perfectum, et varietatem magis pulchram, animæ humanæ complacere, quam in natura ipsa, post lapsum, reperiri ullo modo possit. Quapropter, cum res gestæ, et eventus, qui veræ historiæ subjiciuntur, non sint ejus amplitudinis, in qua anima humana sibi satisfaciat, præsto est Poesis, quæ facta magis heroica confingat. Cum historia vera successus rerum, minime pro meritis virtutum et scelerum narret; corrigit eam Poesis, et exitus, et fortunas, secundum merita, et ex lege Nemeseos, exhibet. Cum historia vera, obvia rerum satietate et similitudine, animæ humanæ fastidio sit; reficit eam Poesis, inexpectata, et varia, et vicissitudinum plena canens. Adeo ut Poesis ista non solum ad delectationem, sed etiam ad animi magnitudinem, et ad mores conferat. Quare et merito etiam divinitatis particeps videri possit; quia animum erigit, et in sublime rapit; rerum simulacra ad animi desideria accommodando, non animum rebus (quod ratio facit et historia) submittendo.

Bacon. De Aug. Scient. pag. 168. *Lug. Bat.* 1645.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Further Illuſtrations. Of Poetical Arrangement.

IT was formerly remarked, that the *events* of Poetry muſt be "more compact, more "clearly connected with cauſes and conſe- "quences, and unfolded in an order more "flattering to the imagination, and more "intereſting to the paſſions," than the events of hiſtory commonly are. This may ſeem to demand ſome illuſtration.

I. Some parts of hiſtory intereſt us much; but others ſo little, that, if it were not for their uſe in the connection of events, we ſhould be inclined to overlook them altogether. But all the parts of a poem muſt be intereſting:—Great, to raiſe admiration or terror; unexpected, to give ſurpriſe; pathetic, to draw forth our tender affections; important, from their tendency to the elucidation of the fable, or to the diſplay of human character; amuſing, from the agreeable pictures of nature they preſent us with; or of peculiar efficacy in promoting our moral improvement. And therefore, in forming an Epic or Dramatic Fable, from hiſtory or tradition,

dition, the poet muſt omit every event that cannot be improved to one or other of theſe purpoſes.

II. Some events are recorded in hiſtory, merely becauſe they are true; though their conſequences be of no moment, and their cauſes unknown. But of all poetical events, the cauſes ought to be manifeſt, for the ſake of probability; and the effects conſiderable, to give them importance.

III. A hiſtory may be as long as you pleaſe; for, while it is inſtructive and true, it is ſtill a good hiſtory. But a poem muſt not be too long: —firſt, becauſe to write good poetry is exceedingly difficult, ſo that a very long poem would be too extenſive a work for human life, and too laborious for human ability; —ſecondly, becauſe, if you would be ſuitably affected with the poet's art, you muſt have a diſtinct remembrance of the whole fable, which could not be, if the fable were very long *; —and, thirdly, becauſe poetry is addreſſed to the imagination and paſſions, which cannot long be kept in violent exerciſe, without working the mind into a diſagreeable ſtate, and even impairing the health of the body. —— That, by theſe three peculiarities of the poetical art, its powers of pleaſing are heightened, and conſequently its end promoted, is too obvious to require proof.

* Ariſtot. Poet. § 7.

IV. The ſtrength of a paſſion depends in part on the vivacity of the impreſſion made by its object. Diſtreſs which we ſee, we are more affected with than what we only hear of; and, of ſeveral deſcriptions of an affecting object, we are moſt moved by that which is moſt lively. Every thing in poetry, being intended to operate on the paſſions, muſt be diſplayed in lively colours, and ſet as it were before the eyes: and therefore the poet muſt attend to many minute, though pictureſque circumſtances, that may, or perhaps muſt, be overlooked by the hiſtorian. Achilles putting on his armour, is deſcribed by Homer with a degree of minuteneſs, which, if it were the poet's buſineſs ſimply to *relate* facts, might appear tedious or impertinent; but which in reality anſwers a good purpoſe, that of giving us a diſtinct image of this dreadful warrior: it being the end of poetical deſcription, not only to *relate* facts, but to *paint* them *; not merely to inform the

* Homer's poetry is always pictureſque. Algarotti, after Lucian, calls him the prince of painters. He ſets before us the whole viſible appearance of the object he deſcribes, ſo that the painter would have nothing to do but to work after his model. He has more epithets expreſſive of colour than any other poet I am acquainted with: *black* earth, *wine-coloured* ocean, and even *white* milk, &c. This to the imagination of thoſe readers who ſtudy the various colourings of nature is highly amuſing, however offenſive it may be to the delicacy of certain critics; — whoſe rules for the uſe of epithets if

the judgement, and enrich the memory, but to awaken the paſſions, and captivate the imagination.

we were to adopt, we ſhould take the palm of poetry from Homer, Virgil, and Milton, and beſtow it on thoſe ſimple rhimers, who, becauſe they have no other merit, muſt be admired for barrenneſs of fancy, and poverty of language. —— An improper uſe of epithets is indeed a grievous fault. And epithets become improper: — 1. when they add nothing to the ſenſe; or to the picture; — and ſtill more, when, 2. they ſeem rather to take ſomething from it; — 3. when by their colloquial meanneſs they debaſe the ſubject. — Theſe three faults are all exemplified in the following lines:

The chariot of the King of kings,
Which *active* troops of angels drew,
On a ſtrong tempeſt's *rapid* wings,
With *moſt amazing* ſwiftneſs flew.
Tate and Brady.

4. Epithets are improper, when, inſtead of adding to the ſenſe, they only exaggerate the ſound. Homer's πολυφλοισβοιο θαλασσης contains both an imitative ſound, and a lively picture: but Thomſon gives us nothing but noiſe, when he ſays, deſcribing a thunder ſtorm,

Follows the looſen'd aggravated roar,
Enlarging, deepening, mingling, peal on peal,
Cruſh'd horrible, convulſing heaven and earth.
Summer.

The following line of Pope is perhaps liable to the ſame objection:

Then ruſtling, crackling, craſhing, thunder down.
Iliad 23.

5. Epithets are faulty, when they overcharge a verſe ſo as to hurt its harmony, and incumber its motion. — 6. When they darken the ſenſe, by crowding too many thoughts

magination. Not that every thing in poetry is to be minutely deſcribed, or that every minute

thoughts together. Both theſe faults appear in this paſſage:

Her eyes in liquid light luxurious ſwim,
And languiſh with unutterable love;
Heaven's *warm* bloom glows along each *brightening* limb,
Where fluttering *bland* the veil's *thin mantlings* rove.

Laſtly, Epithets are improper, when they recur more frequently, than the genius either of the language or of the compoſition will admit. For ſome languages are more liberal of epithets than others, the Italian, for inſtance, than the Engliſh; and ſome ſorts of verſe require a more perfect ſimplicity than others, thoſe, for example, that expreſs dejection or compoſure of mind, than thoſe that give utterance to enthuſiaſm, indignation, and other ardent emotions.

In general, Epithets, that add to the ſenſe, and at the ſame time aſſiſt the harmony, muſt be allowed to be ornamental, if they are not too frequent. Nor ſhould thoſe be objected to, which give to the expreſſion either delicacy or dignity. And as theſe qualities do not at all times depend on the ſame principle, being in ſome degree determined by faſhion, is there not reaſon for ſuppoſing, that the moſt exceptionable of Homer's epithets, thoſe I mean which he applies to his perſons, might in that remote age have had a propriety, whereof at preſent we have no conception? The epithets aſſumed by Eaſtern kings ſeem ridiculous to an European; and yet perhaps may appear ſignificant and ſolemn to thoſe who are accuſtomed to hear them in the original language. Let it be obſerved too, that Homer compoſed his immortal work at a time when writing was not common; when people were rather hearers than readers of poetry, and could not often enjoy the pleaſure even of hearing it; and when, conſequently, the frequent repetition of

minute deſcription muſt of neceſſity be a long one. Nothing has a worſe effect, than deſcriptions too long, too frequent, or too minute; — witneſs the Davideis of Cowley: — and the reader is never ſo effectually intereſted in his ſubject, as when, by means of a few circumſtances well ſelected, he is made to conceive a great many others. From Virgil's *Pulcherrima Dido*, and the following ſimile of Diana amidſt her nymphs *, our fancy may form for itſelf a picture of feminine lovelineſs and dignity more perfect than ever Cowley or Ovid could exhibit in their moſt elaborate deſcriptions. Nay, it has been juſtly remarked by the beſt critics †, that, in the deſcription of great objects, a certain degree of obſcurity, not in the language, but in the picture or notion preſented to the mind, has ſometimes a happy effect in producing admiration, terror, and other emotions connected with the ſublime: — as when the witches in Macbeth deſcribe the horrors of their employment by calling it in three words, "A deed WITHOUT A "NAME." — But it is only a great artiſt,

certain words and phraſes, being a help to memory, as well as to the right apprehenſion of the poet's meaning, would be thought rather a beauty than a blemiſh. The ſame thing is obſervable in ſome of our old ballads.

* Virg. Æneid. lib. 1. verſ. 500.

† Demet. Phaler. § 266. Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful.

who

who knows when to be brief in deſcription, and when copious; where to light up his landſcape with ſunſhine, and where to cover it with darkneſs and tempeſt. To be able to do this, without ſuffering the narration to languiſh in its progreſs, or to run out into an immoderate length; without hurrying us away from affecting objects before our paſſions have time to operate, or fixing our attention too long upon them,—it will be proper, that the poet confine the action of his poem to a ſhort period of time. But hiſtory is ſubject to no reſtraints, but thoſe of truth; and, without incurring blame, may take in any length of duration.

V. The origin of nations, and the beginnings of great events, are little known, and ſeldom intereſting; whence the firſt part of every hiſtory, compared with the ſequel, is ſomewhat dry and tedious. But a poet muſt, even in the beginning of his work, intereſt the readers, and raiſe high expectation; not by any affected pomp of ſtyle, far leſs by ample promiſes or bold profeſſions; but by ſetting immediately before them ſome incident, ſtriking enough to raiſe curioſity, in regard both to its cauſes and to its conſequences. He muſt therefore take up his ſtory, not at the beginning, but in the middle; or rather, to prevent the work from being too long, as near the end as poſſible: and afterwards take ſome proper opportunity to inform us of the preceding events, in the way of

of narrative, or by the converſation of the perſons introduced, or by ſhort and natural digreſſions.

The action of both the Iliad and Odyſſey begins about ſix weeks before its concluſion; although the principal events of the war of Troy are to be found in the former, and the adventures of a ten years voyage, followed by the ſuppreſſion of a dangerous domeſtic enemy, in the latter. One of the firſt things mentioned by Homer in the Iliad, is a plague, which Apollo in anger ſent into the Grecian army commanded by Agamemnon, and now encamped before Troy. Who this Agamemnon was, and who the Grecians were; for what reaſon they had come hither; how long the ſiege had laſted; what memorable actions had been already performed, and in what condition both parties now were: — all this, and much more, we ſoon learn from occaſional hints and converſations interſperſed through the poem.

In the Eneid, which, though it comprehends the tranſactions of ſeven years, opens within a few months of the concluding event, we are firſt preſented with a view of the Trojan fleet at ſea, and no leſs a perſon than Juno intereſting herſelf to raiſe a ſtorm for their deſtruction. This excites a curioſity to know ſomething further: who theſe Trojans were; whence they had come, and whither they were bound; why they had left their own country, and what had befallen them ſince they

they left it. On all these points, the poet, without quitting the track of his narrative, soon gives the fullest information. The storm rises; the Trojans are driven to Africa, and hospitably received by the Queen of the country; at whose desire their commander relates his adventures.

The action of Paradise Lost commences not many days before Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden of Eden, which is the concluding event. This poem, as its plan is incomparably more sublime and more important, than that of either the Iliad or Eneid, opens with a far more interesting scene: a multitude of angels and archangels shut up in a region of torment and darkness, and rolling on a lake of unquenchable fire. Who these angels are, and what brought them into this miserable condition, we naturally wish to know; and the poet in due time informs us; partly from the conversation of the fiends themselves; and more particularly by the mouth of a happy spirit, sent from heaven to caution the father and mother of mankind against temptation, and confirm their good resolutions by unfolding the dreadful effects of impiety and disobedience.

This poetical arrangement of events, so different from the historical, has other advantages besides those arising from brevity, and compactness of detail: it is obviously more affecting to the fancy, and more alarming to the passions; and, being more suitable

ſuitable to the order and the manner in which the actions of other men ſtrike our ſenſes, is a more exact imitation of human affairs. I hear a ſudden noiſe in the ſtreet, and run to ſee what is the matter. An inſurrection has happened, a great multitude is brought together, and ſomething very important is going forward. The ſcene before me is the firſt thing that engages my attention; and is in itſelf ſo intereſting, that for a moment or two I look at it in ſilence and wonder. By and by, when I get time for reflection, I begin to inquire into the cauſe of all this tumult, and what it is the people would be at; and one who is better informed than I, explains the affair from the beginning; or perhaps I make this out for myſelf, from the words and actions of the perſons principally concerned.—This is a ſort of picture * of poetical arrangement, both in Epic and Dramatic Compoſition; and this plan has been followed in narrative odes and ballads both ancient and modern.—The hiſtorian purſues a different method. He begins perhaps with an account of the manners of a certain age, and of the political conſtitution of a certain country; then introduces a particular perſon, gives the ſtory of his birth, connections, private character, purſuits, diſ-

* This illuſtration, or ſomething very like it, I think I have read in Batteux's Commentary on Horace's Art of Poetry.

appointments, and of the events that promoted his views, and brought him acquainted with other turbulent ſpirits like himſelf; and ſo proceeds, unfolding, according to the order of time, the cauſes, principles, and progreſs of the conſpiracy;—if that be the ſubject which he undertakes to illuſtrate. It cannot be denied, that this latter method is more favouruble to calm infomation: but the former, compared with it, will be found to have all the advantages already ſpecified, and to be more effectually productive of that mental pleaſure which depends on the paſſions and imagination.

VI. If a work have no determinate end, it has no meaning; and if it have many ends, it will diſtract by its multiplicity. Unity of deſign, therefore, belongs in ſome meaſure to all compoſitions, whether in verſe or proſe. But to ſome it is more eſſential than to others; and to none ſo much as to the higher poetry. In certain kinds of hiſtory, there is unity ſufficient, if all the events recorded be referred to one perſon; in others, if to one period of time, or to one people, or even to the inhabitants of one and the ſame planet. But it is not enough, that the ſubject of a poetical fable be the exploits of *one perſon*; for theſe may be of various and even of oppoſite ſorts and tendencies, and take up longer time, than the nature of poetry can admit:—far leſs can a regular poem comprehend the affairs of *one period*, or of *one people*:

ple: — it must be limited to some *one great action or event*, to the illustration of which all the subordinate events must contribute; and these must be so connected with one another, as well as with the poet's general purpose, that one cannot be changed, transposed, or taken away, without affecting the consistence and stability of the whole *. In itself an incident may be interesting, a character well drawn, a description beautiful; and yet, if it disfigure the general plan, or if it obstruct or incumber the main action, instead of helping it forward, a correct artist would consider it as but a gaudy superfluity or splendid deformity; like a piece of scarlet cloth sowed upon a garment of a different colour †. Not that all the parts of the fable either are, or can be, equally essential. Many descriptions and thoughts, of little consequence to the plan, may be admitted for the sake of variety; and the poet may, as well as the historian and philosopher, drop his subject for a time, in order to take up an affecting or instructive digression.

The doctrine of poetical digressions and episodes has been largely treated by the critics. I shall only remark, that, in estimating their propriety, three things are to be attended to: — their connection with the fable or subject; — their own peculiar excellence;

* Aristot. Poet. § 8.

† Hor. Ar. Poet. vers. 15. &c.

— and

—and their ſubſerviency to the poet's deſign.

1. Thoſe digreſſions, that both ariſe from and terminate in the ſubject; like the epiſode of the angel Raphael in Paradiſe Loſt, and the tranſition to the death of Ceſar and the civil wars in the firſt book of the Georgic; are the moſt artful, and if ſuitably executed claim the higheſt praiſe:—thoſe that ariſe from, but do not terminate in the ſubject, are perhaps ſecond in the order of merit; like the ſtory of Dido in the Eneid, and the encomium on a country-life in the ſecond book of the Georgic:—thoſe come next, that terminate in, but do not riſe from the fable; of which there are ſeveral in the third book of the Eneid, and in the Odyſſey:—and thoſe, that neither terminate in the fable, nor riſe from it, are the leaſt artful; and if they be long, cannot eſcape cenſure, unleſs their beauty be very great.

But, 2. we are willing to excuſe a beautiful epiſode, at whatever expence to the ſubject it may be introduced. They who can blame Virgil for obtruding upon them the charming tale of Orpheus and Eurydice in the fourth Georgic, or Milton for the apoſtrophe to light in the beginning of his third book, ought to forfeit all title to the peruſal of good poetry; for of ſuch divine ſtrains one would rather be the author, than of all the books of criticiſm in the world. Yet ſtill it is better, that an epiſode poſſeſs the beauty of connection, together with its own

intrinsic elegance, than this without the other.

Moreover, in judging of the propriety of episodes, and other similar contrivances, it may be expedient to attend, 3. to the *design* of the poet, as distinguished from the fable or subject of the poem. The great design, for example, of Virgil, was to interest his countrymen in a poem written with a view to reconcile them to the person and government of Augustus. Whatever, therefore, in the poem tends to promote this design, even though it should, in some degree, hurt the contexture of the fable, is really a proof of the poet's judgement, and may be not only allowed but applauded. — The progress of the action of the Eneid may seem to be too long obstructed, in one place, by the story of Dido, which, though it rises from the preceding part of the poem, has no influence upon the sequel; and, in another, by the episode of Cacus, which, without injury to the *fable*, might have been omitted altogether. Yet these episodes, interesting as they are to us and to all mankind, because of the transcendent merit of the poetry, must have been still more interesting to the Romans, because of their connection with the Roman affairs: for the one accounts poetically for their wars with Carthage; and the other not only explains some of their religious ceremonies, but also gives a most charming rural picture of those hills and vallies in the neighbourhood

bourhood of the Tiber, on which, in after times, their majeſtic city was fated to ſtand. —And if we conſider, that the deſign of Homer's Iliad was, not only to ſhow the fatal effects of diſſenſion among confederates, but alſo to immortaliſe his country, and celebrate the moſt diſtinguiſhed families in it, we ſhall be inclined to think more favourably than critics generally do, of ſome of his long ſpeeches and digreſſions; which, though to us they may ſeem trivial, muſt have been very intereſting to his countrymen, on account of the genealogies and private hiſtory recorded in them. —Shakeſpeare's Hiſtorical Plays, conſidered as Dramatic fables, and tried by the laws of Tragedy and Comedy, appear very rude compoſitions. But if we attend to the poet's *deſign*, (as the elegant critic * has with equal truth and beauty explained it), we ſhall be forced to admire his judgement in the general conduct of thoſe pieces, as well as unequalled ſucceſs in the execution of particular parts.

There is yet another point of view (as hinted formerly) in which theſe digreſſions may be conſidered. If they tend to elucidate any important character, or to introduce any intereſting event not otherwiſe within the compaſs of the poem, or to give an amiable diſplay of any particular virtue, they

* Eſſay on the writings and genius of Shakeſpeare, pag. 55.

may

may be intitled, not to our pardon only, but even to our admiration, however looſely they may hang upon the fable. All theſe three ends are effected by that moſt beautiful epiſode of Hector and Andromache in the ſixth book of the Iliad; and the two laſt, by the no leſs beautiful one of Euryalus and Niſus, in the ninth of the Eneid.

The beauties of poetry are diſtinguiſhable into local and univerſal. The former may reflect great honour on the poet, but the latter are more excellent in themſelves; and theſe chiefly we muſt be ſuppoſed to have in our eye, when we ſpeak of the eſſential characters of the art. A well-invented fable, as it is one of the moſt difficult operations of human genius *, muſt be allowed to be one of

* The difficulty of conſtructing an Epic or Dramatic fable may appear from the bad ſucceſs of very great writers who have attempted it. Of Dramatic fables there are indeed ſeveral in the world, which may be allowed to have come near perfection. But the beauty of Homer's fable remains unrivalled to this day. Virgil and Taſſo have imitated, but not equalled it. That of Paradiſe Loſt is artful, and for the moſt part judicious: I am certain the author could have equalled Homer in this, as he has excelled him in ſome other reſpects: — but the nature of his plan would not admit the introduction of ſo many incidents, as we ſee in the Iliad, co-operating to one determinate end. — Of the Comic Epopee we have two exquiſite models in Engliſh, I mean the *Amelia* and *Tom Jones* of Fielding. The introductory part of the latter follows indeed the hiſtorical arrangement, in a way ſomewhat reſembling the practice of Euripides in his Prologues, or at leaſt as excuſeable: but, with this exception,

of the higheſt beauties of poetry. The *deſign*, as diſtinguiſhed from the *fable*, may ſtand in need of commentators to explain it; but a well-wrought fable is univerſally underſtood, and univerſally pleaſing. And if ever a poet ſhall ariſe, who to the art of Sophocles and Homer, can join the correctneſs and delicacy of Virgil, and the energy, variety, and natural colouring of Shakeſpeare, the world will then ſee ſomething in poetry more excellent than we can at preſent conceive.

tion, we may venture to ſay, that both fables would bear to be examined by Ariſtotle himſelf, and, if compared with thoſe of Homer, would not greatly ſuffer in the compariſon. This author, to an amaſing variety of probable occurrences, and of characters well drawn, well ſupported, and finely contraſted, has given the moſt perfect unity, by making them all co-operate to one and the ſame final purpoſe. It yields a very pleaſing ſurpriſe to obſerve, in the unravelling of his plots, particularly that of *Tom Jones*, how many incidents, to which, becauſe of their apparent minuteneſs, we had ſcarce attended as they occurred in the narrative, are found to have been eſſential to the plot. And what heightens our idea of the poet's art is, that all this is effected by natural means, and human abilities, without any machinery: — while his great maſter Cervantes is obliged to work a miracle for the cure of Don Quixote. — Can any reaſon be aſſigned, why the inimitable Fielding, who was ſo perfect in Epic fable, ſhould have ſucceeded ſo indifferently in Dramatic? Was it owing to the peculiarity of his genius, or of his circumſtances? to any thing in the nature of Dramatic writing in general, or of that particular taſte in Dramatic Comedy which Congreve and Vanburgh had introduced, and which he was obliged to comply with?

And

And now, from the poſition formerly eſtabliſhed, that the end of this divine art is, *to give pleaſure*, I have endeavoured to prove, that, whether in diſplaying the appearances of the material univerſe, or in imitating the workings of the human mind, and the varieties of human character, or in arranging and combining into one whole the ſeveral incidents and parts whereof his fable conſiſts, — the aim of the poet muſt be, to copy Nature, not as it is, but in that ſtate of perfection in which, conſiſtently with the particular genius of the work, and the laws of veriſimilitude, it may be ſuppoſed to be.

Such, in general, is the nature of that poetry which is intended to raiſe admiration, pity, and other *ſerious* emotions. But in this art, as in all others, there are different degrees of excellence; and we have hitherto directed our view chiefly to the higheſt. All ſerious poets are not equally ſolicitous to improve nature. Euripides is ſaid to have repreſented men as they were; Sophocles, more poetically, as they ſhould or might be *. Theocritus, in his Idyls, and Spenſer, in his Shepherd's Calendar, give us language and ſentiments more nearly approaching thoſe of the *Rus verum et barbarum* †, than what we meet with in the Paſtorals of Virgil and Pope. In the *Hiſtorical drama*, human characters and events muſt be according to hi-

* Ariſtot. Poet. † Martial.

ſtorical truth, or at leaſt not ſo remote from it, as to lead into any important miſapprehenſion of fact. And in the *Hiſtorical Epic poem*, ſuch as the *Pharſalia* of Lucan, and the *Campaign* of Addiſon, the hiſtorical arrangement is preferred to the poetical, as being nearer the truth. Yet nature is a little improved even in theſe poems. The perſons in Shakeſpeare's Hiſtorical Plays, and the heroes of the Pharſalia, talk in verſe, and ſuitably to their characters, and with a readineſs, beauty, and harmony of expreſſion, not to be met with in real life, nor even in hiſtory; ſpeeches are invented, and, to heighten the deſcription, circumſtances added, with great latitude; real events are rendered more compact and more ſtrictly dependent upon one another, and fictitious ones brought in, to elucidate human characters, and diverſify the narration.

The more poetry improves nature, by copying after general ideas collected from extenſive obſervation, the more it partakes (according to Ariſtotle) of the nature of philoſophy; the greater ſtretch of fancy and of obſervation it requires in the artiſt, and the better chance it has to be univerſally agreeable. An ordinary painter can give a portrait of a beautiful face: but from a number of ſuch faces to collect a general idea of beauty more perfect than is to be found in any individual, and then to give exiſtence to that idea, by drawing it upon can-

vas, (as Zeuxis is ſaid to have done when he made a famous picture of Helen *), is a work which one muſt poſſeſs invention and judgement, as well as dexterity, to be able to execute. For it is not by copying the eyes of one lady, the lips of another, and the noſe of a third, that ſuch a picture is to be formed; — a medley of this kind would probably be ridiculous, as a certain form of feature may ſuit one face, which would not ſuit another: — but it is by comparing together ſeveral beautiful mouths, (for example), remarking the peculiar charm of each; and then conceiving an idea of that feature, different perhaps from all, and more perfect than any: and thus proceeding through the ſeveral features, with a view, not only to the colour, ſhape, and proportion, of each part, but alſo to the harmony of the whole. It rarely happens, that an individual is ſo complete in any one quality as we could deſire; and though it were in the opinion of ſome, it would not in that of all. A lover may think his miſtreſs a model of perfection; ſhe may have moles and freckles on her face, and an odd caſt of her eye; and yet he ſhall think all this becoming: but another man ſees her in a different light; diſcovers many blemiſhes perhaps, and but few beauties; thinks her too fat or too lean, too ſhort or too tall. Now, what would be the conſe-

* Plin. Hiſt. Natur. lib. 35.

quence,

quence, if this lady's portrait were to appear in a picture, under the character of Helen or Venus? The lover would admire it; but the reſt of the world would wonder at the painter's taſte. Great artiſts have, however, fallen into this error. Rubens, while he was drawing ſome of his pieces, would ſeem to have had but two ideas of feminine lovelineſs; and thoſe were copied from his two wives: all the world approves his conjugal partiality; but his taſte in female beauty all the world does not approve.

Individual objects there are, no doubt, in nature, which command univerſal admiration. There are many women in Great Britain, whoſe beauty all the world would acknowledge. Nay, perhaps, there are ſome ſuch in every nation: for, however capricious our taſte for beauty may be eſteemed by modern philoſophers, I have been aſſured, that in the Weſt Indies a female negro ſeldom paſſes for handſome among the blacks, who is not really ſo in the opinion of the white people. There are characters in real life, which, with little or no heightening, might make a good figure even in Epic poetry: there are natural landſcapes, than which one could not deſire any thing of the kind more beautiful. But ſuch individuals are not the moſt common; and therefore, though the rule is not without exceptions, it may, however, be admitted as a rule, That the poet or painter, who means to adapt himſelf

to the *general* taſte, ſhould copy after *general* ideas collected from extenſive obſervation of nature. For the moſt part, the peculiarities of individuals are agreeable only to individuals; the manners of Frenchmen to Frenchmen; the dreſs of the ſeaſon to the beaux and belles of the ſeaſon; the ſentiments and language of Newmarket, to the heroes of the turf, and their imitators. But manners and ſentiments, dreſſes and faces, may be imagined, which ſhall be agreeable to all who have a right to be pleaſed: and theſe it is the buſineſs of the imitative artiſt to invent, and to exhibit.

Yet mere portraits are uſeful and agreeable: and poetry, even when it falls ſhort of this philoſophical perfection, may have great merit as an inſtrument of both inſtruction and pleaſure. Some minds have no turn to abſtract ſpeculation, and would be better pleaſed with a *notion* of an individual, than with an *idea* of a ſpecies *; or with

* *Idea*, according to the uſage of the Greek philoſophers, from whom we have the word, ſignifies, "A "thought of the mind which is expreſſed by a general "term." *Notion* is uſed by many Engliſh writers of credit to ſignify, "A thought of the mind which may "be expreſſed by a proper or individual name." Thus, I have a *notion* of London, but an *idea* of a city; a *notion* of a particular hero, but an *idea* of heroiſm. Theſe two words have long been confounded by the beſt writers: but it were to be wiſhed, that, as the things are totally different, the names had been ſo too. Had this been

with ſeeing in an Hiſtorical picture or Epic poem, the portraits or characters of their acquaintance, than the ſame form of face or diſpoſition improved into a general idea *. And to moſt men, ſimple unadorned nature is, at certain times, and in certain compoſitions, more agreeable, than the moſt elaborate improvements of art ; as a plain ſhort period, without modulation, gives a pleaſing variety to a diſcourſe. Many ſuch portraits of ſimple nature there are in the ſubordinate parts both of Homer's and of Virgil's poetry : and an excellent effect they have (as was already obſerved) in giving probability to the fiction †, as well as in gratifying the reader's fancy with images diſtinct and lively, and eaſily comprehended. The hiſtorical plays of Shakeſpeare raiſe not our pity and terror to ſuch a height, as Lear, Mac-

been the caſe, a great deal of confuſion peculiar to modern philoſophy, and ariſing from an ambiguous, and almoſt unlimited, uſe of the word *idea*, might have been prevented.

* An hiſtorical picture, like Weſt's *Death of Wolfe*, in which the faces are all portraits of individual heroes, and the dreſſes according to the preſent mode, may be more intereſting now, than if theſe had been more pictureſque, and thoſe expreſſive of different modifications of heroiſm. But in a future age, when the dreſſes are become unfaſhionable, and the faces no longer known as portraits, is there not reaſon to fear, that this excellent piece will loſe of its effect ?

† See chap. 3.

beth,

beth, or Othello; but they intereſt and inſtruct us greatly, notwithſtanding. The rudeſt of the Eclogues of Theocritus, or even of Spenſer, have by ſome authors been extolled above thoſe of Virgil, becauſe more like real life. Nay, Corneille is known to have preferred the Pharſalia to the Eneid, perhaps from its being nearer the truth; or perhaps from the ſublime ſentiments of Stoical morality ſo forcibly and ſo oſtentatiouſly diſplayed in it.

Poets may refine upon nature too much, as well as too little; for affectation and ruſticity are equally remote from true elegance. —— The ſtyle and ſentiments of comedy ſhould no doubt be more correct and more pointed than thoſe of the moſt polite converſation: but to make every footman a wit, and every gentleman and lady an epigrammatiſt, as Congreve has done, is an exceſſive and faulty refinement. The proper medium has been hit by Menander and Terence, by Shakeſpeare in his happier ſcenes, and by Garrick, Cumberland, and ſome others of late renown. —— To deſcribe the paſſion of love with as little delicacy as ſome men ſpeak of it, would be unpardonable; but to transform it into mere platonic adoration, is to run into another extreme, leſs criminal indeed, but too remote from univerſal truth to be univerſally intereſting. To the former extreme Ovid inclines; and Petrarch, and his imitators, to the latter. Virgil

gil has happily avoided both: but Milton has painted this paſſion, as diſtinct from all others, with ſuch peculiar truth and beauty, that we cannot think Voltaire's encomium too high, when he ſays, that love in all other poetry ſeems a weakneſs, but in Paradiſe Loſt a virtue. —— There are many good ſtrokes of nature in Ramſay's Gentle Shepherd; but the author's paſſion for the *Rus verum* betrays him into ſome indelicacies *: — a cenſure that falls with greater weight upon Theocritus, who is often abſolutely indecent. The Italian paſtoral of Taſſo and Guarini, and the French of Fontenelle, run into the oppoſite extreme, (though in ſome parts beautifully ſimple), and diſplay a ſyſtem of rural manners, ſo quaint and affected as to outrage all probability. I ſhould oppoſe ſeveral great names, if I were to ſay, that Virgil has given us the paſtoral poem in its moſt perfect ſtate; and yet I cannot help being of this opinion, though I have not time at preſent to ſpecify my reaſons. —— In fact, though mediocrity of execution in poetry be allowed to deſerve the doom

* The language of this poem has been blamed, on account of its vulgarity. The Scotch dialect is ſufficiently ruſtic, even in its moſt improved ſtate: but in the Gentle Shepherd it is often debaſed by a phraſeology not to be met with, except among the moſt illiterate people. Writers on paſtoral have not always been careful to diſtinguiſh between coarſeneſs and ſimplicity; and yet a plain ſuit of cloaths and a bundle of rags are not more different.

pronounced

pronounced upon it by Horace *; yet is it true, notwithstanding, that in this art, as in many other good things, the point of excellence lies in a middle between two extremes; and has been reached by those only who sought to improve nature as far as the genius of their work would permit, keeping at an equal distance from rusticity on the one hand, and affected elegance on the other.

If it were asked, what effects a view of nature degraded, or rendered less perfect than the reality, would produce in poetry; I should answer, The same which caricatura produces in painting;—it would make the piece ludicrous. In almost every countenance, there are some exceptionable features, by heightening the deformity whereof, it is easy to give a ridiculous likeness even of a good face. And in most human characters there are blemishes, moral, intellectual, or corporeal, by exaggerating which *to a certain degree*, you may form a comic character; as by raising the virtues, abilities, or external advantages of individuals, you form Epic or Tragic characters. I say, *to a certain degree*; for if, by their vices, want of understanding, or bodily infirmities, they should raise disgust, pity, or any other important emotion, they are then no longer the objects of comic ridicule; and it is an egregious fault

* Hor. Ar. Poet. vers. 373.

in a writer to attempt to make them ſo *. It is a fault, becauſe it proves his judgement to be perverted, and tends to pervert the ſentiments, and ruin the morals of mankind.

But is nature always degraded in Comic performances? I anſwer, No; neither is it always improved, as we remarked already, in ſerious poetry. Some human characters are ſo truly heroic, as to raiſe admiration, without any heightenings of poetical art; and ſome are ſo truly laughable, that the comic writer would have nothing to do, but to repreſent them as they are. Beſides, to raiſe laughter is not always the aim, either of the Epic Comedy †, or of the Dramatic: ſublime paſſions and characters are ſometimes introduced; and theſe may be heightened as much as the poet finds neceſſary for his purpoſe, provided that, in his ſtyle, he affect no heroical elevation; and that his action, and the rank of his perſons, be ſuch as might probably be met with in common life. In regard to fable, and the order of events, all Comedy requires, or at leaſt admits, as great perfection as Epic poetry itſelf.

* See Eſſay on Laughter, chap. 3.

† Of the Epic Comedy, which might perhaps be called rather the *Comic Epopee*, *Tom Jones* and *Amelia* are examples.

CHAP. VI.

Remarks on Muſic.

SECT. I.

Of Imitation. Is Muſic an Imitative Art?

MAN from his birth is prone to imitation, and takes great pleaſure in it. At a time when he is too young to underſtand or attend to rules, he learns, by imitating others, to ſpeak, and walk, and do many other things equally requiſite to life and happineſs. Moſt of the ſports of children are imitative, and many of them dramatical. Mimickry occaſions laughter; and a juſt imitation of human life upon the ſtage is highly delightful to perſons of all ranks, conditions, and capacities.

Our natural propenſity to imitation may in part account for the pleaſure it yields: for that is always pleaſing which gratifies natural propenſity; nay, to pleaſe, and to gratify, are almoſt ſynonymous terms. Yet the peculiar charm of imitation may alſo be accounted for upon other principles. To

compare

compare a copy with the original, and trace out the particulars wherein they differ and wherein they reſemble, is in itſelf a pleaſing exerciſe to the mind; and, when accompanied with admiration of the object imitated, and of the genius of the imitator, conveys a moſt intenſe delight; which may be rendered ſtill more intenſe by the agreeable qualities of the *inſtrument* of imitation, — by the beauty of the colours in painting, by the harmony of the language in poetry; and in muſic, by the ſweetneſs, mellowneſs, pathos, and other pleaſing varieties of vocal and inſtrumental ſound. And if to all this there be added, the merit of a moral deſign, Imitation will then ſhine forth in her moſt amiable form, and the enraptured heart acknowledge her powers of pleaſing to be irreſiſtible.

Such is the delight we have in imitation, that what would in itſelf give neither pleaſure nor pain, may become agreeable when well imitated. We ſee without emotion many faces, and other familiar objects; but a good picture even of a ſtone, or common plant, is not beheld with indifference. No wonder, then, that what is agreeable in itſelf, ſhould, when ſurveyed through the medium of ſkilful imitation, be highly agreeable. A good portrait of a grim countenance is pleaſing; but a portrait equally good of a beautiful one is ſtill more ſo. Nay, though a man in a violent paſſion, a mon-

ſtrous wild beaſt, or a body agonized with pain, be a moſt unpleaſing ſpectacle, a picture, or poetical deſcription of it, may be contemplated with delight *; the pleaſure we take in the artiſt's ingenuity, joined to our conſciouſneſs that the object before us is not real, being more than ſufficient to counterbalance every diſagreeable feeling occaſioned by the deformity of the figure †. Even human vices, infirmities, and misfortunes, when well repreſented on the ſtage,

* Ariſtot. Poet. ſect. 4.; Gerard on Taſte, part 1. ſect. 4.

† Pictures, however, of great merit as imitations, and valuable for the morality of the deſign, may yet be too horrid to be contemplated with pleaſure. A robber, who had broke into a repoſitory of the dead, in order to plunder a corpſe of ſome rich ornaments, is ſaid to have been ſo affected with the hideous ſpectacle of mortality which preſented itſelf when he opened the coffin, that he ſlunk away, trembling and weeping, without being able to execute his purpoſe. I have met with an excellent print upon this ſubject; but was never able to look at it for half a minute together. Too many objects of the ſame character may be ſeen in Hogarth's *Progreſs of Cruelty*. —— There is another claſs of ſhocking ideas, which poets have not always been ſufficiently careful to avoid. Juvenal and Swift, and even Pope himſelf, have given us deſcriptions which it turns one's ſtomach to think of. And I muſt confeſs, that, notwithſtanding the authority of Atterbury and Addiſon, and the general merit of the paſſage, I could never reconcile myſelf to ſome filthy ideas, which, to the unſpeakable ſatisfaction of Mr Voltaire, Milton has unwarily introduced in the famous allegory of Sin and Death.

form

form a moſt intereſting amuſement. So great is the charm of imitation.

That has been thought a very myſterious pleaſure, which we take in witneſſing tragical imitations of human action, even while they move us to pity and ſorrow. Several cauſes ſeem to co-operate in producing it. 1. It gives an agreeable agitation to the mind, to be deeply intereſted in any event, that is not attended with real harm to ourſelves or others. Nay, certain events of the moſt ſubſtantial diſtreſs would ſeem to give a gloomy entertainment to ſome minds: elſe why ſhould men run ſo eagerly to ſee ſhipwrecks, executions, riots, and even battles, and fields of ſlaughter? But the diſtreſs upon the ſtage neither is, nor is believed to be, real; and therefore the agreeable exerciſe it may give to the mind is not allayed by any bitter reflections, but is rather heightened by this conſideration, that the whole is imaginary. To thoſe who miſtake it for real, as children are ſaid to do ſometimes, it gives no pleaſure, but intenſe pain. 2. Throughout the performance, we admire the genius of the poet, as it appears in the language and ſentiments, in the right conduct of the fable, in diverſifying and ſupporting the characters, and in deviſing incidents affecting in themſelves, and conducive to the main deſign. 3. The ingenuity of the actors muſt be allowed to be a principal cauſe of the pleaſure with which we witneſs either tragedy

or

or comedy. A bad play well acted may pleaſe, and in fact often does; but a good play ill acted is intolerable. 4. We ſympathiſe with the emotions of the audience, and this heightens our own. For I apprehend, that no perſon of ſenſibility would chuſe to be the ſole ſpectator of a play, if he had it in his power to ſee it in company with a multitude. When we have read by ourſelves a pleaſing narrative, till it has loſt every charm that novelty can beſtow, we may renew its reliſh by reading it in company, and perhaps be even more entertained than at the firſt peruſal. 5. The ornaments of the theatre, the muſic, the ſcenery, the ſplendor of the company, nay the very dreſs of the players, muſt be allowed to contribute ſomething to our amuſement: elſe why do managers expend ſo much money in decoration? And, laſtly, let it be obſerved, that there is ſomething very peculiar in the nature of pity. The pain, however exquiſite, that accompanies this amiable affection, is ſuch, that a man of a generous mind would not diſqualify himſelf for it, even if he could: nor is the "luxury of woe," that we read of in poetry, a mere figure of ſpeech, but a real ſenſation, wherewith every perſon of humanity is acquainted, by frequent experience. Pity produces a tenderneſs of heart very friendly to virtuous impreſſions. It inclines us to be circumſpect and lowly, and ſenſible of the uncertainty of human things, and of our

our dependence upon the great Author of our being; while continued joy and prosperity harden the heart, and render men proud, irreligious, and inattentive: so that Solomon had good reason for affirming, that "by the sadness of the countenance the heart "is made better." The exercise of pity, even towards imaginary sufferings, cannot fail to give pleasure, if attended, as it generally is, with the approbation of reason and conscience, declaring it to be a virtuous affection, productive of signal benefit to society, and peculiarly suitable to our condition, honourable to our nature, and amiable in the eyes of our fellow-creatures *.

Since Imitation is so plentiful a source of pleasure, we need not wonder, that the imitative arts of poetry and painting should have been greatly esteemed in every enlightened age. The imitation itself, which is the work of the artist, is agreeable; the thing imitated, which is nature, is also agreeable; and is not the same thing true of the instrument of imitation? Or does any one doubt, whether harmonious language be pleasing to the ear, or certain arrangements of colour beautiful to the eye?

Shall I apply these, and the preceding reasonings, to the Musical Art also, which I

* Since these remarks were written, Dr Campbell has published a very accurate and ingenious dissertation on this subject. See his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, vol. 1.

have

have elſewhere called, and which is generally underſtood to be, Imitative? Shall I ſay, that ſome melodies pleaſe, becauſe they imitate nature, and that others, which do not imitate nature, are therefore unpleaſing? — that an air expreſſive of devotion, for example, is agreeable, becauſe it preſents us with an imitation of thoſe ſounds by which devotion does naturally expreſs itſelf? —— Such an affirmation would hardly paſs upon the reader; notwithſtanding the plauſibility it might ſeem to derive from that ſtrict analogy which all the fine arts are ſuppoſed to bear to one another. He would aſk, What is the natural ſound of devotion? Where is it to be heard? When was it heard? What reſemblance is there between Handel's *Te Deum*, and the tone of voice natural to a perſon expreſſing, by articulate ſound, his veneration of the Divine Character and Providence? — In fact, I apprehend, that critics have erred a little in their determinations upon this ſubject, from an opinion, that Muſic, Painting, and Poetry, are all imitative arts. I hope at leaſt I may ſay, without offence, that while this was my opinion, I was always conſcious of ſome unaccountable confuſion of thought, whenever I attempted to explain it in the way of detail to others.

But while I thus inſinuate, that Muſic is not an imitative art, I mean no diſreſpect to Ariſtotle, who ſeems in the beginning of his

Poetics to declare the contrary. It is not the whole, but *the greater part* of muſic, which that philoſopher calls Imitative; and I agree with him ſo far as to allow this property to ſome muſic, though not to all. But he ſpeaks of the ancient muſic, and I of the modern; and to one who conſiders how very little we know of the former, it will not appear a contradiction to ſay, that the one might have been imitative, though the other is not.

Nor do I mean any diſreſpect to muſic, when I would ſtrike it off the liſt of imitative arts. I allow it to be a fine art, and to have great influence on the human ſoul: I grant, that, by its power of raiſing a variety of agreeable emotions in the hearer, it proves its relation to poetry, and that it never appears to the beſt advantage but with poetry for its interpreter: and I am ſatisfied, that, though muſical genius may ſubſiſt without poetical taſte, and poetical genius without muſical taſte; yet theſe two talents united might accompliſh nobler effects, than either could do ſingly. I acknowledge too, that the principles and eſſential rules of this art are as really founded in nature, as thoſe of poetry and painting. But when I am aſked, What part of nature is imitated in any good picture or poem, I find I can give a definite anſwer: whereas, when I am aſked, What part of nature is imitated in Handel's *Water-muſic*, for inſtance, or in Corelli's

eighth concerto, or in any particular Engliſh ſong or Scotch tune, I find I can give no definite anſwer: — though no doubt I might ſay ſome plauſible things; or perhaps, after much refinement, be able to ſhow, that Muſic may, by one ſhift or other, be made an imitative art, provided you allow me to give any meaning I pleaſe to the word *imitative*.

Muſic is imitative, when it readily puts one in mind of the thing imitated. If an explication be neceſſary, and if, after all, we find it difficult to recogniſe any exact ſimilitude, I would not call ſuch muſic an imitation of nature; but conſider it as upon a footing, in point of likeneſs, with thoſe pictures, wherein the action cannot be known but by a label proceeding from the mouth of the agent, nor the ſpecies of animal aſcertained without a name written under it. But between imitation in muſic and imitation in painting, there is this one eſſential difference: — a bad picture is always a bad imitation of nature, and a good picture is neceſſarily a good imitation; but muſic may be exactly imitative, and yet intolerably bad; or not at all imitative, and yet perfectly good. I have heard, that the *Paſtorale* in the eighth of Corelli's *Concertos* (which appears by the inſcription to have been compoſed for the night of the Nativity) was intended for an imitation of the ſong of angels hovering above the fields of Bethlehem, and gradually ſoaring up to heaven. The muſic,

muſic, however, is not ſuch as would of itſelf convey this idea: and, even with the help of the commentary, it requires a lively fancy to connect the various movements and melodies of the piece with the motions and evolutions of the heavenly hoſt; as ſometimes flying off, and ſometimes returning; ſinging ſometimes in one quarter of the ſky, and ſometimes in another; now in one or two parts, and now in full chorus. It is not clear, that the author intended any imitation; and whether he did or not, is a matter of no conſequence; for the muſic will continue to pleaſe, when the tradition is no more remembered. The harmonies of this *paſtorale* are indeed ſo uncommon, and ſo raviſhingly ſweet, that it is almoſt impoſſible not to think of heaven when one hears them. I would not call them imitative; but I believe they are finer than any imitative muſic in the world.

Sounds in themſelves can imitate nothing directly but ſounds, nor in their motions any thing but motions. But the natural ſounds and motions that muſic is allowed to imitate, are but few. For, firſt, they muſt all be conſiſtent with the fundamental principles of the art, and not repugnant either to melody or to harmony. Now, the foundation of all true muſic, and the moſt perfect of all muſical inſtruments, is the human voice; which is therefore the prototype of the muſical ſcale, and a ſtandard of muſical

ſound. Noiſes, therefore, and inharmonious notes of every kind, which a good voice cannot utter without ſtraining, ought to be excluded from this pleaſing art: for it is impoſſible, that thoſe vocal ſounds which require any unnatural efforts, either of the ſinger or ſpeaker, ſhould ever give permanent gratification to the hearer. I ſay, permanent gratification; for I deny not, that the preternatural ſcreams of an Italian ſinger may occaſion ſurpriſe, and momentary amuſement: but thoſe ſcreams are not muſic; they are admired, not for their propriety or pathos, but, like rope-dancing, and the eating of fire, merely becauſe they are uncommon and difficult. —— Beſides, the end of all genuine muſic is, to introduce into the human mind certain affections, or ſuſceptibilities of affection. Now, all the affections, over which muſic has any power, are of the agreeable kind. And therefore, in this art, no imitations of natural ſound or motion, but ſuch as tend to inſpire agreeable affections, ought ever to find a place. The ſong of certain birds, the murmur of a ſtream, the ſhouts of multitudes, the tumult of a ſtorm, the roar of thunder, or a chime of bells, are ſounds connected with agreeable or ſublime affections, and reconcileable both with melody and with harmony; and may therefore be imitated, when the artiſt has occaſion for them: but the crowing of cocks, the barking of dogs, the mewing of cats, the grunting

ing of ſwine, the gabbling of geeſe, the cackling of a hen, the braying of an aſs, the creaking of a ſaw, or the rumbling of a cart-wheel, would render the beſt muſic ridiculous. The movement of a dance may be imitated, or the ſtately pace of an embattled legion; but the hobble of a trotting horſe would be intolerable.

There is another ſort of imitation by ſound, which ought never to be heard, or ſeen, in muſic. To expreſs the local elevation of objects by what *we* call *high* notes, and their depreſſion by *low* or *deep* notes, has no more propriety in it, than any other pun. *We* call notes *high* or *low*, with reſpect of their ſituation in the written ſcale. There would have been no abſurdity in expreſſing the higheſt notes by characters placed at the bottom of the ſcale or muſical line, and the loweſt notes by characters placed at the top of it, if cuſtom or accident had ſo determined. And there is reaſon to think, that ſomething like this actually obtained in the muſical ſcale of the ancients. At leaſt it is probable, that the deepeſt or graveſt ſound was called *Summa* by the Romans, and the ſhrilleſt or acuteſt *Ima*; which might be owing to the conſtruction of their inſtruments; the ſtring that ſounded the former being perhaps higheſt in place, and that which ſounded the latter loweſt.—Yet ſome people would think a ſong faulty, if the word *heaven* was ſet to what

what we call a *low* note, or the word *hell* to what we call a *high* one.

All theſe ſorts of illicit imitation have been practiſed, and by thoſe too from whom better things were expected. This abuſe of a noble art did not eſcape the ſatire of Swift; who, though deaf to the charms of muſic, was not blind to the abſurdity of muſicians. He recommended it to Dr Ecclin, an ingenious gentleman of Ireland, to compoſe a *Cantata* in ridicule of this puerile mimicry. Here we have *motions* imitated, which are the moſt inharmonious, and the leaſt connected with human affections; as the *trotting*, *ambling*, and *galloping*, of Pegaſus; and *ſounds* the moſt unmuſical, as *crackling* and *ſniveling*, and *rough royſtering ruſtic roaring ſtrains:* the words *high* and *deep* have high and deep notes ſet to them; a ſeries of ſhort notes of equal lengths are introduced, to imitate *ſhivering* and *ſhaking;* an irregular rant of quick ſounds, to expreſs *rambling;* a ſudden riſe of the voice, from a low to a high pitch, to denote *flying above the ſky;* a ridiculous run of chromatic diviſions on the words *Celia dies;* with other droll contrivances of a like nature. In a word, Swift's Cantata alone may convince any perſon, that muſic uniformly imitative would be ridiculous.——I juſt obſerve in paſſing, that the ſatire of this piece is levelled, not at abſurd imitation only, but alſo at ſome other muſical improprieties; ſuch as the idle repetition

tion of the ſame words, the running of long extravagant diviſions upon one ſyllable, and the ſetting of words to muſic that have no meaning.

If I were entitled to ſuggeſt any rules in this art, I would humbly propoſe, (and a great muſician and ingenious writer ſeems to be of the ſame mind *), that no imitation ſhould ever be introduced into muſic purely inſtrumental. Of vocal melody the expreſſion is, or ought to be, aſcertained by the poetry; but the expreſſion of the beſt inſtrumental muſic is ambiguous. In this, therefore, there is nothing to lead the mind of the hearer to recogniſe the imitation, which, though both legitimate and accurate, would run the riſk of being overlooked and loſt. If, again, it were ſo very exact, as to lead our thoughts inſtantly to the thing imitated, we ſhould be apt to attend to the imitation only, ſo as to remain inſenſible to the general effect of the piece. In a word, I am inclined to think, that imitation in an inſtrumental *concerto* would produce either no effect, or a bad one. The ſame reaſons would exclude it from inſtrumental *ſolos;* provided they were ſuch as deſerve to be called muſic: — if they be contrived only to ſhow the dexterity of the performer, imitations, and all poſſible varieties of ſound, may be thrown in *ad libitum;* any thing will

* Aviſon on Muſical Expreſſion, p. 57. 60. ſecond edit.

do,

do, that can aſtoniſh the audience; but to ſuch fiddling or fingering I would no more give the honourable name of Muſic, than I would apply that of Poetry to Pope's "Flut-"tering ſpread thy purple pinions," or to Swift's *Ode on Ditton and Whiſton.*

In vocal muſic, truly ſuch, the words render the expreſſion determinate, and fix the hearer's attention upon it. Here therefore legitimate imitations may be employed; both becauſe the ſubject of the ſong will render them intelligible, and becauſe the attention of the hearer is in no danger of being ſeduced from the principal air. Yet even here, theſe imitations muſt be laid upon the inſtrumental accompaniment, and by no means attempted by the ſinger, unleſs they are expreſſive, and muſical, and may be eaſily managed by the voice. In the ſong, which is the principal part, expreſſion ſhould be predominant, and imitations never uſed at all, except to aſſiſt the expreſſion. Beſides, the tones of the human voice, though the moſt pathetic of all ſounds, are not ſuited to the quirks of imitative melody, which will always appear to beſt advantage on an inſtrument. In the firſt part of that excellent ſong, "Hide me from day's gairiſh "eye, "While the bee with honey'd thigh "At her flowery work does ſing, "And the "waters murmuring, "With ſuch concert "as they keep, "Intice the dewy feather'd "ſleep,"—Handel imitates the murmur of

groves and waters by the accompaniment of tenors: in another ſong of the ſame *Oratorio*, "On a plat of riſing ground, "I hear the "far-off curfew ſound, "Over ſome wide-"water'd ſhore, "Swinging ſlow with ſul-len roar,"—he makes the baſs imitate the evening-bell: in another fine ſong, "Huſh, "ye pretty warbling choir,"—he accom-panies the voice with a flageolet that imitates the ſinging of birds: in the "Sweet bird "that ſhun'ſt the noiſe of folly," the chief accompaniment is a German flute imitating occaſionally the notes of the nightingale.—Sometimes, where expreſſion and imitation happen to coincide, and the latter is eaſily managed by the voice, he makes the ſong itſelf imitative. Thus, in that ſong, "Let "the merry bells ring round, "And the "jocund rebecks ſound, "To many a "youth and many a maid, "Dancing in "the chequer'd ſhade,"—he makes the voice in the beginning imitate the *ſound* of a chime of bells, and in the end the *motion* and gaiety of a dance.

Of theſe imitations no body will queſtion the propriety. But Handel, notwithſtanding his inexhauſtible invention, and wonderful talents in the ſublime and pathetic, is ſub-ject to fits of trifling, and frequently errs in the application of his imitative contrivances. In that ſong "What paſſion cannot muſic "raiſe and quell," when he comes to the words, "His liſtening brethren ſtood around,

" And wondering on their faces *fell*," — the accompanying violoncello *falls* ſuddenly from a quick and *high* movement to a very *deep* and long note. In another ſong of the ſame piece *, " Sharp violins proclaim " Their jealous pangs and deſperation, " Fu- " ry, frantic indignation, " *Depth* of pains " and *height* of paſſion, " For the fair diſ- " dainful dame;" — the words " *Depth* of " pains and *height* of paſſion," are thrice repeated to different keys; and the notes of the firſt clauſe are conſtantly *deep*, and thoſe of the ſecond as regularly *high*. The poet however is not leſs blameable than the muſician. — And many other examples of the ſame kind might be produced from the works of this great artiſt †.

What has been ſaid may ſerve to ſhow both the extent, and the merit of Imitative Muſic ‡. It extends to thoſe natural ſounds and motions only, which are agree-

* Dryden's Ode on St Cecilia's day.

† That pretty paſtoral ode of Shakeſpeare, " When " daiſies pied and violets blue," has been ſet to muſic by Mr Leveridge; who makes the ſinger imitate, not only the note of the cuckoo, (which may be allowed, becauſe eaſily performed, and perfectly muſical), but alſo the ſhriek of the owl.

‡ By Imitative Muſic I muſt always be underſtood to mean, that which imitates *natural* ſounds and motions. Fugues, and other ſimilar contrivances, which, like echoes, repeat or imitate particular portions of the melody, it belongs not to this place to conſider.

able

able in themſelves, conſiſtent with melody and harmony, and aſſociated with agreeable affections and ſentiments. Its merit is ſo inconſiderable, that muſic purely inſtrumental is rather hurt than improved by it; and vocal muſic employs it only as a help to the expreſſion, except in ſome rare caſes, where the imitation is itſelf expreſſive as well as agreeable, and at the ſame time within the power of the human voice.

The beſt maſters lay it down as a maxim, that melody and harmony are not to be deſerted, even for the ſake of expreſſion itſelf *. Expreſſion that is not conſiſtent with theſe is not *muſical* expreſſion; and a compoſer who does not render them conſiſtent, violates the eſſential rules of his art †. If we compare

* Aviſon on Muſical Expreſſion, page 56.

† Harmony and Melody are as eſſential to genuine muſic, as perſpective is to painting. However ſolicitous a painter may be to give expreſſion to the figures in his back ground, he muſt not ſtrengthen their colour, nor define their outlines, ſo as to hurt the perſpective by bringing them too near. A muſician will be equally faulty, if he violate the harmony of his piece, in order to heighten the pathos. There is likewiſe in poetry ſomething analogous to this. In thoſe poems that require a regular and uniform verſification, a poet may perhaps, in ſome rare inſtances, be allowed to break through the rules of his verſe, for the ſake of rendering his numbers more emphatical. Milton at leaſt is intitled to take ſuch a liberty:

——— Eternal wrath
Burn'd after them to the bottomleſs pit. *Parad. Loſt.*

pare Imitation with Expreſſion, the ſuperiority of the latter will be evident. Imitation without Expreſſion is nothing: Imitation detrimental to Expreſſion is faulty: Imitation is never tolerable, at leaſt in ſerious muſic, except it promote and be ſubſervient to Expreſſion. If then the higheſt excellence may be attained in inſtrumental muſic, without imitation; and if, even in vocal muſic, imitation have only a ſecondary merit; it muſt follow, that the imitation of nature is not eſſential to this art; though ſometimes, when judiciouſly employed, it may be ornamental.

Different paſſions and ſentiments do indeed give different tones and accents to the

And Virgil:

Proluit inſano contorquens vortice ſylvas
Fluviorum rex Eridanus. —— *Geor.* i.

And Homer:

Διὰ μὲν ἀσπίδος ἦλθε φαεινῆς ὄμβριμον ἔγχος. Iliad iii.

But theſe licences muſt not be too glaring: and therefore I know not whether Dyer is not blameable for giving us, in order to render his numbers imitative, a Trochaic verſe of four feet and an half, inſtead of an Iambic of five:

The pilgrim oft
At dead of night, midſt his oraiſon hears
Aghaſt the voice of Time; diſparting towers
Tumbling all precipitate, down daſh'd,
Rattling around, &c. *Ruins of Rome.*

human

human voice. But can the tones of the moſt pathetic melody be ſaid to bear a reſemblance to the voice of a man or woman ſpeaking from the impulſe of paſſion? — The *flat key*, or *minor mode*, is found to be well adapted to a melancholy ſubject; and, if I were diſpoſed to refine upon the imitative qualities of the art, I would give this for a reaſon, that melancholy, by depreſſing the ſpirits, weakens the voice, and makes it riſe rather by *minor thirds*, which conſiſt of but four ſemitones, than by *major thirds*, which conſiſt of five. But is not this reaſon more ſubtle than ſolid? Are there not melancholy airs in the *ſharp key*, and chearful ones in the *flat?* Nay, in the ſame air, do we not often meet with a tranſition from the one key to the other, without any ſenſible change in the expreſſion?

Courage is apt to vent itſelf in a ſtrong tone of voice: but can no muſical ſtrains inſpire fortitude, but ſuch as are ſonorous? The Lacedemonians did not think ſo; otherwiſe they would not have uſed the muſic of ſoft pipes when advancing to battle *. If it be objected, that the firm deliberate valour, which the Spartan muſic was intended to inſpire, does not expreſs itſelf in a bluſtering, but rather in a gentle accent, reſembling the muſic of ſoft pipes, I would recommend it to the objector to chuſe, from

* Aulus Gellius, lib. 1. cap. 11.

all

all the muſic he is acquainted with, ſuch an air as he thinks would moſt effectually awaken his courage; and then conſider, how far that animating ſtrain can be ſaid to reſemble the accent of a commander complimenting his troops after a victory, or encouraging them before it. Shakeſpeare ſpeaks of the "ſpirit-ſtirring drum;" and a moſt emphatical epithet it muſt be allowed to be. But why does the drum excite courage? Is it becauſe the *ſound* imitates the voice of a valiant man? or does the *motion* of the drum-ſticks bear any ſimilitude to that of his legs or arms?

Many Chriſtians (I wiſh I could ſay *all*) know to their happy experience, that the tones of the organ have a wonderful power in raiſing and animating devout affections. But will it be ſaid, that there is any reſemblance between the ſound of that noble inſtrument, or the fineſt compoſitions that can be played on it, and the voice of a human creature employed in an act of worſhip?

One of the moſt affecting ſtyles in muſic is the *Paſtoral*. Some airs put us in mind of the country, of "rural ſights and rural "ſounds," and diſpoſe the heart to that chearful tranquillity, that pleaſing melancholy, that "vernal delight," which groves and ſtreams, flocks and herds, hills and vallies, inſpire. But of what are theſe paſtoral airs imitative? Is it of the murmur of waters, the warbling of groves, the lowing of herds, the

the bleating of flocks, or the echo of vales and mountains? Many airs are paſtoral, which imitate none of theſe things. What then do they imitate? — the ſongs of ploughmen, milkmaids, and ſhepherds? Yes: they are ſuch, as we think we have heard, or might have heard, ſung by the inhabitants of the country. Then they muſt *reſemble* country-ſongs; and if ſo, theſe ſongs muſt alſo be in the paſtoral ſtyle. Of what then are theſe country-ſongs, the ſuppoſed archetypes of paſtoral muſic, imitative? Is it of other country-ſongs? This ſhifts the difficulty a ſtep backward, but does not by any means take it away. Is it of rural ſounds, proceeding from things animated, or from things inanimate? or of rural motions — of men, beaſts, or birds? of winds, woods, or waters? — In a word, an air may be paſtoral, and in the higheſt degree pleaſing, which imitates neither ſound nor motion, nor any thing elſe whatever.

After all, it muſt be acknowledged, that there is ſome relation at leaſt, or analogy, if not ſimilitude, between certain muſical ſounds, and mental affections. Soft muſic may be conſidered as analogous to gentle emotions; and loud muſic, if the tones are ſweet and not too rapid, to ſublime ones; and a quick ſucceſſion of noiſy notes, like thoſe we hear from a drum, ſeems to have ſome relation to hurry and impetuoſity of paſſion. Sometimes, too, there is from nature,

ture, and ſometimes there comes to be from cuſtom, a connection between certain muſical inſtruments, and certain places and occaſions. Thus a flute, hautboy, or bagpipe, is better adapted to the purpoſes of rural muſic, than a fiddle, organ, or harpſichord, becauſe more portable, and leſs liable to injury from the weather: thus an organ, on account both of its ſize and loudneſs, requires to be placed in a church, or ſome large apartment: thus violins and violoncellos, to which any degree of damp may prove hurtful, are naturally adapted to domeſtic uſe; while drums and trumpets, fifes and french-horns, are better ſuited to the ſervice of the field. Hence it happens, that particular tones and modes of muſic acquire ſuch a connection with particular places, occaſions, and ſentiments, that by hearing the former we are put in mind of the latter, ſo as to be affected with them more or leſs, according to the circumſtances. The ſound of an organ, for example, puts one in mind of a church, and of the affections ſuitable to that place; military muſic, of military ideas; and flutes and hautboys, of the thoughts and images peculiar to rural life. This may ſerve in part to account for muſical expreſſiveneſs or efficacy; that is, to explain how it comes to paſs, that certain paſſions are raiſed, or certain ideas ſuggeſted, by certain kinds of muſic: but this does not prove muſic to be an imitative art, in the

ſame ſenſe wherein painting and poetry are called imitative. For between a picture and its original; between the ideas ſuggeſted by a poetical deſcription and the objects deſcribed, there is a ſtrict ſimilitude: but between ſoft muſic and a calm temper there is no ſtrict ſimilitude; and between the ſound of a drum or of an organ and the affection of courage or of devotion, between the muſic of flutes and a paſtoral life, between a concert of violins and a chearful company, there is only an accidental connection, formed by cuſtom, and founded rather on the nature of the inſtruments, than on that of the muſic.

It may perhaps be thought, that man learned to ſing by imitating the birds; and therefore, as vocal muſic is allowed to have been the prototype of inſtrumental, that the whole art muſt have been eſſentially imitative. Granting the fact, this only we could infer from it, that the art was imitative at firſt: but that it ſtill continues to be ſo, does not follow; for it cannot be ſaid, either that the ſtyle of our muſic reſembles that of birds, or that our muſical compoſers make the ſong of birds the model of their compoſitions. But it is vain to argue from hypotheſis: and the fact before us, though taken for granted by ſome authors, is deſtitute of evidence, and plainly abſurd. How can it be imagined, that mankind learned to ſing by imitating the feathered race? I would as ſoon ſuppoſe, that we learned to ſpeak by imitating

the neigh of a horſe, or to walk by obſerving the motion of fiſhes in water; or that the political conſtitution of Great Britain was formed upon the plan of an ant-hillock. Every muſician, who is but moderately inſtructed in the principles of his art, knows, and can prove, that, in the *ſharp ſeries* at leaſt, the diviſions of the diatonic ſcale, which is the ſtandard of human muſic, are no artificial contrivance, but have a real foundation in nature: but the ſinging of birds, if we except the cuckoo and one or two more, is not reducible to that ſcale, nor to any other that was ever invented by man; for birds diverſify their notes by intervals which the human organs cannot imitate without unnatural efforts, and which therefore it is not to be ſuppoſed that human art will ever attempt to expreſs by written ſymbols. In a word, it is plain, that nature intended one kind of muſic for men, and another for birds: and we have no more reaſon to think, that the former was derived by imitation from the latter, than that the neſts of a rookery were the prototype of the Gothic architecture, or the combs in a bee-hive of the Grecian.

Muſic, therefore, is pleaſing, not becauſe it is imitative, but becauſe certain melodies and harmonies have *an aptitude* to raiſe certain paſſions, affections, and ſentiments in the ſoul. And, conſequently, the pleaſures we derive from melody and harmony are ſeldom

dom or never reſolvable into that delight which the human mind receives from the imitation of nature.

All this, it may be ſaid, is but a diſpute about a word. Be it ſo: but it is, notwithſtanding, a diſpute ſomewhat material both to art and to ſcience. It is material, in ſcience, that philoſophers have a determined meaning to their words, and that things be referred to their proper claſſes. And it is of importance to every art, that its deſign and end be rightly underſtood, and that artiſts be not taught to believe that to be eſſential to it, which is only adventitious, often impertinent, for the moſt part unneceſſary, and at beſt but ornamental.

SECT. II.

How are the pleaſures we derive from Muſic to be accounted for?

IT was ſaid, that certain melodies and harmonies have *an aptitude* to raiſe certain paſſions, affections, and ſentiments, in the human ſoul. Let us now inquire a little into the nature of this *aptitude*; by endeavouring, from acknowledged principles of the human conſtitution, to explain the cauſe of that pleaſure which mankind derive from

muſic. I am well aware of the delicacy of the argument, and of my inability to do it juſtice; and therefore I promiſe no complete inveſtigation, nor indeed any thing more than a few curſory remarks. As I have no theory to ſupport, and as this topic, though it may amuſe, is not of any great utility, I ſhall be neither poſitive in my aſſertions, nor abſtruſe in my reaſoning.

The vulgar diſtinguiſh between the ſenſe of hearing, and that faculty by which we receive pleaſure from muſic, and which is commonly called *a muſical ear*. Every body knows, that to hear, and to have a reliſh for melody, are two different things; and that many perſons have the firſt in perfection, who are deſtitute of the laſt. The laſt is indeed, like the firſt, a gift of nature; and may, like other natural gifts, languiſh if neglected, and improve exceedingly if exerciſed. And though every perſon who hears, might no doubt, by inſtruction and long experience, be made ſenſible of the muſical properties of ſound, ſo far as to be in ſome meaſure gratified with good muſic and diſguſted with bad; yet both his pain and his pleaſure would be very different in kind and degree, from that which is conveyed by a true muſical ear.

I. Does not part of the pleaſure, both of melody and of harmony, ariſe from the very nature of the notes that compoſe it? Certain inarticulate ſounds, eſpecially when continued,

continued, produce very pleasing effects on the mind. They seem to withdraw the attention from the more tumultuous concerns of life, and, without agitating the soul, to pour gradually upon it a train of softer ideas, that sometimes lull and soothe the faculties, and sometimes quicken sensibility, and stimulate the imagination. Nor is it altogether absurd to suppose, that the human body may be mechanically affected by them. If in a church one feels the floor, and the pew, tremble to certain tones of the organ; if one string vibrates of its own accord when another is sounded near it of equal length, tension, and thickness; if a person who sneezes, or speaks loud, in the neighbourhood of a harpsichord, often hears the strings of the instrument murmur in the same tone; we need not wonder, that some of the finer fibres of the human frame should be put in a tremulous motion, when they happen to be in unison with any notes proceeding from external objects. — That certain bodily pains might be alleviated by certain sounds, was believed by the Greeks and Romans: and we have it on the best authority, that one species at least of madness was once curable by melody *. I have seen even instrumental music of little expression draw tears from those who had no knowledge of the art, nor any particular relish for it. Nay, a friend of mine,

* First book of Samuel, chap. xvi. vers. 23.

who

who is profoundly ſkilled in the theory of muſic, well acquainted with the animal economy, and ſingularly accurate in his inquiries into nature, aſſures me, that he has been once and again wrought into a feveriſh fit by the tones of an Eolian harp. Theſe, and other ſimilar facts that might be mentioned, are not eaſily accounted for, unleſs we ſuppoſe, that certain ſounds may have a mechanical influence upon certain parts of the human body.—Be that however as it will, it admits of no doubt, that the mind may be agreeably affected by mere ſound, in which there is neither meaning nor modulation; not only by the tones of the Eolian harp, and other muſical inſtruments, but alſo by the murmur of winds, groves, and water-falls *; nay by the ſhouts of multitudes, by the uproar of the ocean in a ſtorm; and, when one can liſten to it without fear, by that "deep and dreadful organ-pipe," the thunder itſelf.

Nothing is more valued in a muſical inſtrument or performer, than ſweetneſs, fullneſs, and variety of tone. Sounds are diſagreeable, which hurt the ear by their ſhrillneſs, or which cannot be heard without pain-

* Quæ tibi, quæ tali reddam pro carmine dona?
Nam neque me tantum venientis ſibilus auſtri,
Nec percuſſa juvant fluctu tam littora, nec quæ
Saxoſas inter decurrunt flumina valles.
Virg. Eclog. 5.

ful

ful attention on account of their exility. But *loud* and *mellow* ſounds, like thoſe of thunder, of a ſtorm, and of the full organ, elevate the mind through the ear; even as vaſt magnitude yields a pleaſing aſtoniſhment, when contemplated by the eye. By ſuggeſting the idea of great power, and ſometimes of great expanſion too, they excite a pleaſing admiration, and ſeem to accord with the lofty genius of that ſoul whoſe chief deſire is for truth, virtue, and immortality, and the object of whoſe moſt delightful meditation is the greateſt and beſt of Beings *. *Sweetneſs* of tone, and beauty of ſhape and colour, produce a placid acquieſcence of mind, accompanied with ſome degree of joy, which plays in a gentle ſmile upon the countenance of the hearer and beholder. *Equable* ſounds, like ſmooth and level ſurfaces, are in general more pleaſing than ſuch as are rough, uneven, or interrupted; yet, as the flowing curve, ſo eſſential to elegance of figure, and ſo conſpicuous in the outlines of beautiful animals, is delightful to the eye; ſo notes *gradually ſwelling*, and *gradually decaying*, have an agreeable effect on the ear, and on the mind; the former tending to rouſe the faculties, and the latter to compoſe them; the one promoting gentle exerciſe, and the other reſt.

* See Longinus, ſect. 34. Spectator, N° 413. Pleaſures of Imagination, book 1. verſ. 151. &c.

But

But of all ſounds, that which makes its way moſt directly to the human heart, is the human voice: and thoſe inſtruments that approach neareſt to it are in expreſſion the moſt pathetic, and in tone the moſt perfect. The notes of a man's voice, well tuned and well managed, have a mellowneſs, variety, and energy, beyond thoſe of any inſtrument; and a fine female voice, modulated by ſenſibility, is beyond compariſon the ſweeteſt, and moſt melting ſound, in art or nature. Is it not ſtrange, that the moſt muſical people upon earth, diſſatisfied, as it would ſeem, with both theſe, ſhould have incurred a dreadful reproach, in order to introduce a third ſpecies of vocal ſound, that has not the perfection of either? For may it not be affirmed with truth, that no perſon of uncorrupted taſte ever heard for the firſt time the muſic I allude to, without ſome degree of horror; proceeding not only from the diſagreeable ideas ſuggeſted by what was before his eyes, but alſo from the thrilling ſharpneſs of tone that ſtartled his ear? Let it not be ſaid, that by this abominable expedient, choruſes are rendered more complete, and melodies executed, which before were impracticable. Nothing that ſhocks humanity ought to have a place in human art; nor can a good ear be gratified with unnatural ſound, or a good taſte with too intricate compoſition. Surely, every lover of muſic, and of mankind, would wiſh to

ſee a practice aboliſhed which is in itſelf a diſgrace to both; and, in its conſequences, ſo far from being deſirable, that it cannot truly be ſaid to do any thing more than to debaſe a noble art into trick and grimace, and make the human breath a vehicle, not to human ſentiments, but to mere empty ſcreaming and ſqualling.

II. Some notes, when ſounded together, have an agreeable, and others a diſagreeable effect. The former are *concords*, the latter *diſcords*. When the fluctuations of air produced by two or more contemporary notes do mutually coincide, the effect is agreeable; when they mutually repel each other, the effect is diſagreeable. Theſe coincidences are not all equally perfect; nor theſe repulſions equally ſtrong: and therefore all concords are not equally ſweet, nor all diſcords equally harſh. A man unſkilled in muſic might imagine, that the moſt agreeable harmony * muſt be made up of the ſweeteſt concords, without any mixture of diſcord: and in like manner, a child might fancy, that a feaſt of ſweet-meats would prove the moſt delicious banquet. But both would be miſtaken. The ſame concord may be more or leſs pleaſing, according to its poſition; and

* *Melody*, in the language of art, is the agreeable effect of a ſingle ſeries of muſical tones: *Harmony* is the agreeable effect of two or more ſeries of muſical tones ſounded at the ſame time.

the ſweeter concords often produce their beſt effect, when they are introduced by the harſher ones, or even by diſcords; for then they are moſt agreeable, becauſe they give the greateſt relief to the ear: even as health is doubly delightful after ſickneſs, liberty after confinement, and a ſweet taſte when preceded by a bitter. Diſſonance, therefore, is neceſſary to the perfection of harmony. But conſonance predominates; and to ſuch a degree, that, except on rare occaſions, and by a nice ear, the diſcord in itſelf is hardly perceptible.

Muſicians have taken pains to diſcover the principles on which concords and diſcords are to be ſo arranged as to produce the beſt effect; and have thus brought the whole art of harmony within the compaſs of a certain number of rules, ſome of which are more, and others leſs indiſpenſable. Theſe rules admit not of demonſtrative proof: for though ſome of them may be inferred by rational deduction from the very nature of ſound; yet the ſupreme judge of their propriety is the human ear. They are, however, founded on obſervation ſo accurate and ſo juſt, that no artiſt ever thought of calling them in queſtion. Rouſſeau indeed ſomewhere inſinuates, that habit and education might give us an equal reliſh for a different ſyſtem of harmony; a ſentiment which I ſhould not have expected from an author, who for the moſt part recommends an implicit confidence

confidence in our natural feelings, and who certainly underſtands human nature well, and muſic better than any other philoſopher. That a baſs of *ſevenths* or *fourths*, or even of *fifths*, ſhould ever become ſo agreeable to any human ear, as one conſtructed according to the ſyſtem, is to me as inconceivable, as that Virgil, though turned into rugged proſe, would be read and admired as much as ever. Rouſſeau could not mean to extend this remark to the whole ſyſtem, but only to ſome of its mechanical rules: and indeed it muſt be allowed, that in this, as well as in other arts, there are rules which have no better foundation than faſhion, or the practice of ſome eminent compoſer.

Natural ſenſibility is not taſte, though it be neceſſary to it. A painter diſcovers both blemiſhes and beauties in a picture, in which an ordinary eye can perceive neither. In poetical language, and in the arrangement and choice of words, there are many niceties, whereof they only are conſcious who have practiſed verſification, as well as ſtudied the works of poets, and the rules of the art. In like manner, harmony muſt be ſtudied a little in its principles by every perſon who would acquire a true reliſh for it; and nothing but practice will ever give that quickneſs to his ear which is neceſſary to enable him to enter with adequate ſatisfaction, or rational diſlike, into the merits or demerits of a muſical performance. When once

he can attend to the progreſs, relations, and dependencies, of the ſeveral parts; and remember the paſt, and anticipate the future, at the ſame time he perceives the preſent; ſo as to be ſenſible of the ſkill of the compoſer, and dexterity of the performer; — a regular concerto, well executed, will yield him high entertainment, even though its regularity be its principal recommendation. The pleaſure which an untutored hearer derives from it is far inferior: and yet there is ſomething in harmony that pleaſes, and in diſſonance that offends, every ear; and were a piece to be played conſiſting wholly of diſcords, or put together without any regard to rule, I believe no perſon whatever would liſten to it without great diſguſt.

After what has been briefly ſaid of the agreeable qualities of muſical notes, it will not ſeem ſtrange, that a piece, either of melody or of harmony, of little or no expreſſion, ſhould, when elegantly performed, give ſome delight; not only to adepts, who can trace out the various contrivances of the compoſer, but even to thoſe who have little or no ſkill in this art, and muſt therefore look upon the whole piece as nothing more than a combination of pleaſing ſounds.

III. But Pathos, or Expreſſion, is the chief excellence of muſic. Without this, it may amuſe the ear, it may give a little exerciſe to the mind of the hearer, it may for a moment withdraw the attention from the anxities

anxieties of life, it may ſhow the performer's dexterity, the ſkill of the compoſer, or the merit of the inſtruments; and in all or any of theſe ways, it may afford a ſlight pleaſure: but, without engaging the affections, it can never yield that permanent, uſeful, and heart-felt gratification, which legiſlators, civil, military, and eccleſiaſtical, have expected from it. Is it abſurd to aſcribe utility, and permanence, to the effects produced by this noble art? Let me expatiate a little in its praiſe.——Did not one of the wiſeſt, and leaſt voluptuous, of all ancient legiſlators, give great encouragement to muſic *?——Does not a moſt judicious author aſcribe the humanity of the Arcadians to the influence of this art, and the barbarity of their neighbours the Cynethians to their neglect of it †?——Does not Monteſquieu, one of the firſt names in modern philoſophy, prefer it to all other amuſements, as being that which leaſt corrupts the ſoul ‡?——Quintilian is very copious in the praiſe of muſic; and extols it as an incentive to valour, as an inſtrument of moral and intellectual diſcipline, as an auxiliary to ſcience, as an object of attention to the wiſeſt men, and a ſource of comfort and an aſſiſtant in

* Lycurgus. See Plutarch.

† Polybius. Hiſt. lib. 4.

‡ Eſprit des loix, liv. 4. ch. 8.

labour,

labour, even to the meaneſt*. The heroes of ancient Greece were ambitious to excel in muſic; and it is recorded of Themiſtocles, as ſomething extraordinary, that he was not. Socrates appears to have had checks of conſcience for neglecting to accompliſh himſelf in this art; for he tells Cebes, a little before he ſwallowed the deadly draught, that he had all his life been haunted with a dream, in which one ſeemed to ſay to him, "O Socrates, compoſe and practiſe muſic;" in compliance with which admonition he amuſed himſelf while under ſentence of death, with turning ſome of Eſop's fables into verſe, and making a hymn in honour of Apollo, —the only ſort of harmonious compoſition that was then in his power †. In armies, muſic has always been cultivated as a ſource of pleaſure, a principle of regular motion, and an incentive to valour and enthuſiaſm. The Son of Sirach declares the ancient poets and muſicians to be worthy of honour, and ranks them with the benefactors of mankind ‡. Nay, Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles were pleaſed to introduce this art into the Chriſtian worſhip; and the church has in every age followed the example.

Muſic, however, would not have recom-

* Inſt. Orat. lib. 1. cap. 8.

† Plat. Phædon. ſect. 4.

‡ Eccleſiaſticus, xliv. 1. — 8.

mended

mended itſelf ſo effectually to general eſteem, if it had always been merely inſtrumental. For, if I miſtake not, the expreſſion of muſic without poetry is vague and ambiguous; and hence it is, that the ſame air may ſometimes be repeated to every ſtanza of a long ode or ballad. The change of the poet's ideas, provided the ſubject continue nearly the ſame, does not always require a change of the muſic: and if critics have ever determined otherwiſe, they were led into the miſtake, by ſuppoſing, what every muſician knows to be abſurd, that, in fitting verſes to a tune, or a tune to verſes, it is more neceſſary, that *particular words* ſhould have *particular notes* adapted to them, than that the *general tenor* of the muſic ſhould accord with the *general nature* of the ſentiments.

It is true, that to a favourite air, even when unaccompanied with words, we do commonly annex certain ideas, which may have come to be related to it in conſequence of ſome accidental aſſociations: and ſometimes we imagine a reſemblance (which however is merely imaginary) between certain melodies and certain thoughts or objects. Thus a Scotchman may fancy, that there is ſome ſort of likeneſs between that charming air which he calls *Tweedſide*, and the ſcenery of a fine paſtoral country: and to the ſame air, even when only played on an inſtrument, he may annex the ideas of romantic love and rural tranquillity; becauſe theſe form

form the ſubject of a pretty little ode, which he has often heard ſung to that air. But all this is the effect of habit. A foreigner, who hears that tune for the firſt time, entertains no ſuch fancy. The utmoſt we can expect from him is, to acknowledge the air to be ſweet and ſimple. He would ſmile, if we were to aſk him, whether it bears any reſemblance to the hills, groves, and meadows, adjoining to a beautiful river; nor would he perhaps think it more expreſſive of romantic love, than of conjugal, parental, or filial affection, tender melancholy, moderate joy, or any other gentle paſſion. Certain it is, that on any one of theſe topics, an ode might be compoſed, which would ſuit the air moſt perfectly. So ambiguous is muſical expreſſion.

It is likewiſe true, that muſic merely inſtrumental does often derive ſignificancy from external circumſtances. When an army in battle-array is advancing to meet the enemy, words are not neceſſary to give meaning to the military muſic. And a ſolemn air on the organ, introducing or dividing the church-ſervice, may not only elevate the mind, and baniſh impertinent thoughts, but alſo, deriving energy from the ſurrounding ſcene, may promote religious meditation.

Nor can it be denied, that inſtrumental muſic may both quicken our ſenſibility, and give a direction to it; that is, may both prepare the mind for being affected, and de-

termine it to one ſet of affections rather than another; — to melancholy, for inſtance, rather than merriment, compoſure rather than agitation, devotion rather than levity, and contrariwiſe. Certain tunes, too, there are, which, having been always connected with certain actions, do, merely from the power of habit, diſpoſe men to thoſe actions. Such are the tunes commonly uſed to regulate the motions of dancing.

Yet it is in general true, that Poetry is the moſt immediate and moſt accurate interpreter of Muſic. Without this auxiliary, a piece of the beſt muſic, heard for the firſt time, might be ſaid to mean ſomething, but we ſhould not be able to ſay what. It might incline the heart to ſenſibility: but poetry, or language, would be neceſſary to improve that ſenſibility into a real emotion, by fixing the fancy upon ſome definite and affecting ideas. A fine inſtrumental ſymphony well performed, is like an oration delivered with propriety, but in an unknown tongue; it may affect us a little, but conveys no determinate feeling; we are alarmed, perhaps, or melted, or ſoothed, but it is very imperfectly, becauſe we know not why: — the ſinger, by taking up the ſame air, and applying words to it, immediately tranſlates the oration into our own language; then all uncertainty vaniſhes, the fancy is filled with determinate ideas, and determinate emotions take poſſeſſion of the heart.

A great part of our fashionable music seems intended rather to tickle and astonish the hearers, than to inspire them with any permanent emotions. And if that be the end of the art, then, to be sure, this fashionable music is just what it should be, and the simpler strains of former ages are good for nothing. Nor am I now at leisure to inquire, whether it be better for an audience to be thus tickled and astonished, than to have their fancy impressed with beautiful images, and their hearts melted with tender passions, or elevated with sublime ones. But if you grant me this one point, that music is more or less perfect, in proportion as it has more or less power over the heart, it will follow, that all music merely instrumental, and which does not derive significancy from any of the associations, habits, or outward circumstances, above mentioned, is to a certain degree imperfect; and that, while the rules hinted at in the following queries are overlooked by composers and performers, vocal music, though it may astonish mankind, or afford them a slight gratification, will never be attended with those important effects that we know it produced of old in the days of simplicity and true taste.

1. Is not good music set to bad poetry as unexpressive, and therefore as absurd, as good poetry set to bad music, or as harmonious language without meaning? Yet the generality of musicians appear to be indifferent

ent in regard to this matter. If the ſound of the words be good, or the meaning of particular words agreeable; if there be a competency of hills and rills, doves and loves, fountains and mountains, with a tolerable collection of garlands and lambkins, nymphs and cupids, *bergerès* and *tortorellas*, they are not ſolicitous about ſenſe or elegance. In which they ſeem to me to conſult their own honour as little as the rational entertainment of others. For what is there to elevate the mind of that compoſer, who condemns himſelf to ſet muſic to inſipid doggerel? Handel's genius never ſoared to heaven, till it caught ſtrength and fire from the ſtrains of inſpiration.—— 2. Should not the words of every ſong be intelligible to thoſe to whom it is addreſſed, and be diſtinctly articulated, ſo as to be heard as plainly as the notes? Or can the human mind be rationally gratified with that which it does not perceive, or which, if it did perceive, it would not underſtand? And therefore, is not the muſic of a ſong faulty, when it is ſo complex as to make the diſtinct articulation of the words impracticable?—— 3. If the ſinger's voice and words ought to be heard in every part of the ſong, can there be any propriety in noiſy accompaniments? And as every performer in a numerous band is not perfectly diſcreet, and as ſome performers may be more careful to diſtinguiſh themſelves than do juſtice to the ſong, will not an inſtru-

mental accompaniment be almoſt neceſſarily too noiſy, if it is complex? —— 4. Does not the frequent repetition of the ſame words in a ſong, confound its meaning, and diſtract the attention of both the ſinger and the hearer? And are not long-winded diviſions (or ſucceſſions of notes warbled to one ſyllable) attended with a like inconvenience, and with this additional bad effect, that they diſqualify the voice for expreſſion, by exhauſting it? Is not ſimplicity as great a perfection in muſic, as in painting and poetry? Or ſhould we admire that orator who choſe to expreſs by five hundred words, a ſentiment that might be more emphatically conveyed in five? —— 5. Ought not the ſinger to bear in mind, that he has ſentiments to utter as well as ſounds? And if ſo, ſhould he not perfectly underſtand what he ſays, as well as what he ſings; and not only modulate his notes with the art of a muſician, but alſo pronounce his words with the propriety of a public ſpeaker? If he is taught to do this, does he not learn of courſe to avoid all grimace and finical geſticulation? And will he not then acquit himſelf in ſinging like a rational creature, and a man of ſenſe? Whereas, by purſuing a contrary conduct, is he not to be conſidered rather as a puppet or wind-inſtrument, than as an elegant artiſt? —— 6. Is not church-muſic more important than any other? and ought it not for that reaſon to be moſt intelligible and

and expreſſive? But will this be the caſe, if the notes are drawn out to ſuch an immoderate length, that the words of the ſinger cannot be underſtood? Beſides, does not exceſſive ſlowneſs, in ſinging or ſpeaking, tend rather to wear out the ſpirits, than to elevate the fancy, or warm the heart? It would ſeem, then, that the vocal part of church-muſic ſhould never be ſo ſlow as to fatigue thoſe who ſing, or to render the words of the ſong in any degree unintelligible to thoſe who hear. —— 7. Do flouriſhed cadences, whether by a voice or inſtrument, ſerve any other purpoſe, than to take off our attention from the ſubject, and ſet us a-ſtaring at the flexibility of the performer's voice, the ſwiftneſs of his fingers, or the ſound of his fiddle? And if this be their only uſe, do they not counteract, inſtead of promoting, the chief end of muſic? What ſhould we think, if a tragedian, at the concluſion of every ſcene, or of every ſpeech, in Othello, were to ſtrain his throat into a preternatural ſcream, make a hideous wry face, or cut a caper four feet high? We might wonder at the ſtrength of his voice, the pliancy of his features, or the ſpringineſs of his limbs; but ſhould hardly admire him as intelligent in his art, or reſpectful to his audience.

But is it not agreeable to hear a *florid ſong* by a fine performer, though now and then the voice ſhould be drowned amidſt the accompaniments,

companiments, and though the words ſhould not be underſtood by the hearers, or even by the ſinger? I anſwer, that nothing can be very agreeable, which brings diſappointment. In the caſe ſuppoſed, the tones of the voice might no doubt give pleaſure: but from inſtrumental muſic we expect ſomething more, and from vocal muſic a great deal more, than mere ſweetneſs of ſound. From poetry and muſic united we have a right to expect pathos, ſentiment, and melody, and in a word every gratification that the tuneful art can beſtow. But in ſweetneſs of tone the beſt ſinger is not ſuperior, and ſcarcely equal, to an Eolus harp, to Viſcher's hautboy, or to Giardini's violin. And can we without diſſatisfaction ſee a human creature dwindle into mere wood and catgut? Can we be gratified with what only tickles the ear, when we had reaſon to hope, that a powerful addreſs would have been made to the heart?—A handſome actreſs walking on the ſtage would no doubt be looked at with complacency for a minute or two, though ſhe were not to ſpeak a word. But ſurely we had a right to expect a different ſort of entertainment; and were her ſilence to laſt a few minutes longer, I believe the politeſt audience in Europe would let her know that they were offended.—To conclude: A ſong, which we liſten to without underſtanding the words, is like a picture ſeen at too great a diſtance. The former

may

may be allowed to charm the ear with ſweet ſounds, in the ſame degree in which the latter pleaſes the eye with beautiful colours. But, till the deſign of the whole, and the meaning of each part, be made obvious to ſenſe, it is impoſſible to derive any rational entertainment from either.

I hope I have given no offence to the connoiſſeur by theſe obſervations. They are dictated by a hearty zeal for the honour of an art, of which I have heard and ſeen enough to be ſatisfied, that it is capable of being improved into an inſtrument of virtue, as well as of pleaſure. If I did not think ſo, I ſhould hardly have taken the trouble to write theſe remarks, ſlight as they are, upon the philoſophy of it. But to return:

Every thing in art, nature, or common life, muſt give delight, which communicates delightful paſſions to the human mind. And becauſe all the paſſions that muſic can inſpire are of the agreeable kind, it follows, that all pathetic or expreſſive muſic muſt be agreeable. Muſic may inſpire devotion, fortitude, compaſſion, benevolence, tranquillity; it may infuſe a gentle ſorrow that ſoftens, without wounding, the heart, or a ſublime horror that expands, and elevates, while it aſtoniſhes, the imagination: but muſic has no expreſſion for impiety, cowardice, cruelty, hatred, or diſcontent. For every eſſential rule of the art tends to produce pleaſing combinations,

combinations of ſound; and it is difficult to conceive, how from theſe any painful or criminal affections ſhould ariſe. I believe, however, it might be practicable, by means of harſh tones, irregular rhythm, and continual diſſonance, to work the mind into a diſagreeable ſtate, and to produce horrible thoughts, and criminal propenſity, as well as painful ſenſations. But this would not be muſic; nor can it ever be for the intereſt of any ſociety to put ſuch a villanous art in practice.

Milton was ſo ſenſible of the moral tendency of muſical expreſſion, that he aſcribes to it the power of raiſing ſome praiſe-worthy emotions even in the devils themſelves *. Would Dryden, if he had been an adept in this art, as Milton was, have made the ſong of Timotheus inflame Alexander to revenge and cruelty? — At any rate, I am well pleaſed that Dryden fell into this miſtake (if it be one), becauſe it has produced ſome of the moſt animated lines that ever were written †. And I am alſo pleaſed to find, for the honour of muſic, and of this criticiſm, that hiſtory aſcribes the burning of Perſepolis, not to any of the tuneful tribe, but to the inſtigation of a drunken harlot.

IV. Is there not reaſon to think, that

* Paradiſe Loſt, b. 1. verſ. 549. — 562.

† Alexander's Feaſt, ſtanza 6.

variety and ſimplicity of ſtructure may contribute ſomething to the agreeableneſs of muſic, as well as of poetry and proſe. Variety, kept within due bounds, cannot fail to pleaſe, becauſe it refreſhes the mind with perpetual novelty; and is therefore ſtudiouſly ſought after in all the arts, and in none of them more than in muſic. To give this character to his compoſitions, the poet varies his phraſeology and ſyntax; and the feet, the pauſes, and the ſound of contiguous verſes, as much as the ſubject, the language, and the laws of verſification will permit: and the proſe-writer combines longer with ſhorter ſentences in the ſame paragraph, longer with ſhorter clauſes in the ſame ſentence, and even longer with ſhorter words in the ſame clauſe; terminates contiguous clauſes and ſentences by a different cadence, and conſtructs them by a different ſyntax; and in general avoids all monotony and ſimilar ſounds, except where they are unavoidable, or where they may contribute (as indeed they often do) to energy or perſpicuity. The muſician diverſifies his *melody*, by changing his keys; by deferring or interrupting his cadences; by a mixture of ſlower and quicker, higher and lower, ſofter and louder notes; and, in pieces of length, by altering the rhythm, the movement, and the air: and his *harmony* he varies, by varying his concords and diſcords, by a change of modulation, by contraſting the aſcent or ſlower motion of one

part to the deſcent or quicker motion of another, by aſſigning different harmonies to the ſame melody, or different melodies to the ſame harmony, and by many other contrivances.

Simplicity makes muſic, as well as language, intelligible and expreſſive. It is in every work of art a recommendatory quality. In muſic it is indiſpenſable; for we are never pleaſed with that muſic which we cannot underſtand, or which ſeems to have no meaning. Of the ancient muſic little more is known, than that it was very affecting and very ſimple. All popular and favourite airs; all that remains of the old national muſic in every country; all military marches, church-tunes, and other compoſitions that are more immediately addreſſed to the heart, and intended to pleaſe the general taſte; all proverbial maxims of morality and prudence, and all thoſe poetical phraſes and lines, which every body remembers, and is occaſionally repeating, are remarkable for ſimplicity. To which we may add, that language, while it improves in ſimplicity, grows ſtill more and more perfect: and that, as it loſes this character, it declines in the ſame proportion from the ſtandard of elegance, and draws nearer and nearer to utter depravation *. Without ſimplicity, the varieties of art, inſtead of pleaſing, would only bewilder

* See *Le Vicende della Litteratura del. Sig. Carlo Denina.*

the

the attention, and confound the judgement.

Rhythm, or Number, is in muſic a copious ſource of both variety and uniformity. Not to enter into any nice ſpeculation on the nature of rhythm *, (for which this is not a proper place), I ſhall only obſerve, that notes, as united in muſic, admit of the diſtinction of quick and ſlow, as well as of acute and grave; and that on the former diſtinction depends what is here called *Rhythm*. It is the only thing in a tune which the drum can imitate. And by that inſtrument, the rhythm of any tune may be imitated moſt perfectly, as well as by the ſound of the feet in dancing: — only as the feet can hardly move ſo quick as the drum-ſticks, the dancer may be obliged to repeat his ſtrokes at longer intervals, by ſuppoſing the muſic divided into larger portions; to give one ſtroke, for example, where the drummer might give two or three, or two where the other would give four or ſix. For every piece of regular muſic is ſuppoſed to be divided into ſmall portions (ſeparated in writing a by croſs line called a *bar*) which, whether they contain more or fewer notes, are all equal in reſpect of time. In this way, the rhythm is a ſource of *uniformity*; which

* The nature of Rhythm, and the ſeveral diviſions of it, are very accurately explained by the learned author of An Eſſay *on the origin and progreſs of language*, vol. 2. p. 301.

pleaſes, by ſuggeſting the agreeable ideas of regularity and ſkill, and, ſtill more, by rendering the muſic intelligible. It alſo pleaſes, by raiſing and gratifying expectation: for if the movement of the piece were governed by no rule; if what one hears of it during the preſent moment were in all reſpects unlike and incommenſurable to what one was to hear the next, and had heard the laſt, the whole would be a maſs of confuſion; and the ear would either be bewildered, having nothing to reſt upon, and nothing to anticipate; or, if it ſhould expect any ſtated *ratio* between the motion and the time, would be diſappointed when it found that there was none.—That rhythm is a ſource of very great *variety*, every perſon muſt be ſenſible, who knows only the names of the muſical notes, with ſuch of their diviſions and ſubdiviſions as relate to time; or who has attended to the manifold varieties of quick and ſlow motion, which the drum is capable of producing.

As order and proportion are always delightful, it is no wonder that mankind ſhould be agreeably affected with the rhythm of muſic. That they are, the univerſal uſe of dancing, and of the "ſpirit-ſtirring drum," is a ſufficient evidence. Nay, I have known a child imitate the rhythm of tunes before he could ſpeak, and long before he could manage his voice ſo as to imitate their melody;—which is a proof, that human nature is ſuſceptible

ſuſceptible of this delight previouſly to the acquirement of artificial habits.

V. I hinted at the power of accidental aſſociation in giving ſignificancy to muſical compoſitions. It may be remarked further, that aſſociation contributes greatly to heighten their agreeable effect. We have heard them performed, ſome time or other, in an agreeable place perhaps, or by an agreeable perſon, or accompanied with words that deſcribe agreeable ideas; or we have heard them in our early years; a period of life, which we ſeldom look back upon without pleaſure, and of which Bacon recommends the frequent recollection as an expedient to preſerve health. Nor is it neceſſary, that ſuch melodies or harmonies ſhould have much intrinſic merit, or that they ſhould call up any diſtinct remembrance of the agreeable ideas aſſociated with them. There are ſeaſons, at which we are gratified with very moderate excellence. In childhood, every tune is delightful to a muſical ear; in our advanced years, an indifferent tune will pleaſe, when ſet off by the amiable qualities of the performer, or by any other agreeable circumſtance.—During the laſt war, the *Belleiſle march* was long a general favourite. It filled the minds of our people with magnificent ideas of armies, and conqueſt, and military ſplendor; for they believed it to be the tune that was played by the French garriſon when it marched out with the honours of war, and ſurrendered

ſurrendered that fortreſs to the Britiſh troops. —The flute of a ſhepherd, heard at a diſtance, in a fine ſummer day, amidſt a beautiful ſcene of groves, hills, and waters, will give rapture to the ear of the wanderer, though the tune, the inſtrument, and the muſician, be ſuch as he could not endure in any other place. —If a ſong, or piece of muſic, ſhould call up only a faint remembrance, that we were happy the laſt time we heard it, nothing more would be needful to make us liſten to it again with peculiar ſatisfaction.

It is an amiable prejudice that people generally entertain in favour of their national muſic. This loweſt degree of patriotiſm is not without its merit: and that man muſt have a hard heart, or dull imagination, in whom, though endowed with muſical ſenſibility, no ſweet emotions would ariſe, on hearing, in his riper years, or in a foreign land, thoſe ſtrains that were the delight of his childhood. What though they be inferior to the Italian? What though they be even irregular and rude? It is not their merit, which in the caſe ſuppoſed would intereſt a native, but the charming ideas they would recal to his mind: —ideas of innocence, ſimplicity, and leiſure, of romantic enterpriſe, and enthuſiaſtic attachment; and of ſcenes, which, on recollection, we are inclined to think, that a brighter ſun illuminated, a freſher verdure crowned, and purer ſkies and happier

happier climes conſpired to beautify, than are now to be ſeen in the dreary paths of care and diſappointment, into which men, yielding to the paſſions peculiar to more advanced years, are tempted to wander.—There are couplets in Ogilvie's Tranſlation of Virgil, which I could never read without emotions far more ardent than the merit of the numbers would juſtify. But it was that book which firſt taught me "the tale of Troy "divine," and firſt made me acquainted with poetical ſentiments; and though I read it when almoſt an infant, it conveyed to my heart ſome pleaſing impreſſions, that remain there unimpaired to this day.

There is a dance in Switzerland, which the young ſhepherds perform to a tune played on a ſort of bag-pipe. The tune is called *Rance des vaches;* it is wild and irregular, but has nothing in its compoſition that could recommend it to our notice. But the Swiſs are ſo intoxicated with this tune, that if at any time they hear it, when abroad in foreign ſervice, they burſt into tears; and often fall ſick, and even die, of a paſſionate deſire to reviſit their native country; for which reaſon, in ſome armies where they ſerve, the playing of this tune is prohibited *. This tune, having been the attendant of their childhood and early youth, recals

* Rouſſeau. Dictionaire de Muſique, art. *Rance des vaches.*

to

to their memory thoſe regions of wild beauty and rude magnificence, thoſe days of liberty and peace, thoſe nights of feſtivity, thoſe happy aſſemblies, thoſe tender paſſions, which formerly endeared to them their country, their homes, and their employments; and which, when compared with the ſcenes of uproar they are now engaged in, and the ſervitude they now undergo, awaken ſuch regret as entirely overpowers them.

SECT. III.

Conjectures on ſome peculiarities of National Muſic.

THere is a certain ſtyle of melody peculiar to each muſical country, which the people of that country are apt to prefer to every other ſtyle. That they ſhould prefer their own, is not ſurpriſing; and that the melody of one people ſhould differ from that of another, is not more ſurpriſing, perhaps, than that the language of one people ſhould differ from that of another. But there is ſomething not unworthy of notice in the particular expreſſion and ſtyle that characteriſe the muſic of one nation or province, and diſtinguiſh it from every other ſort of muſic. Of this diverſity Scotland ſupplies

a ſtriking example. The native melody of the highlands and weſtern iſles is as different from that of the ſouthern part of the kingdom, as the Iriſh or Erſe language is different from the Engliſh or Scotch. In the concluſion of a diſcourſe on muſic as it relates to the mind, it will not perhaps be impertinent to offer a conjecture on the cauſe of theſe peculiarities; which, though it ſhould not (and indeed I am ſatisfied that it will not) fully account for any one of them, may however incline the reader to think that they are not unaccountable, and may alſo throw ſome faint light on this part of philoſophy.

Every thought that partakes of the nature of paſſion, has a correſpondent expreſſion in the look and geſture: and ſo ſtrict is the union between the paſſion and its outward ſign, that, where the former is not in ſome degree felt, the latter can never be perfectly natural, but, if aſſumed, becomes aukward mimickry, inſtead of that genuine imitation of nature, which draws forth the ſympathy of the beholder. If, therefore, there be, in the circumſtances of particular nations or perſons, any thing that gives a peculiarity to their paſſions and thoughts, it ſeems reaſonable to expect, that they will alſo have ſomething peculiar in the expreſſion of their countenance, and even in the form of their features. Caius Marius, Jugurtha, Tamerlane, and ſome other great warriors, are celebrated for a peculiar ferocity of aſpect, which they had

no doubt contracted from a perpetual and unreſtrained exertion of fortitude, contempt, and other violent emotions. Theſe produced in the face their correſpondent expreſſions, which being often repeated, became at laſt as habitual to the features, as the ſentiments they aroſe from were to the heart. Savages, whoſe thoughts are little inured to controul, have more of this ſignificancy of look, than thoſe men, who, being born and bred in civilized nations, are accuſtomed from their childhood to ſuppreſs every emotion that tends to interrupt the peace of ſociety. And while the bloom of youth laſts, and the ſmoothneſs of feature peculiar to that period, the human face is leſs marked with any ſtrong character, than in old age: — a peeviſh or ſurly ſtripling may elude the eye of the phyſiognomiſt; but a wicked old man, whoſe viſage does not betray the evil temperature of his heart, muſt have more cunning than it would be prudent for him to acknowledge. Even by the trade or profeſſion the human countenance may be characteriſed. They who employ themſelves in the nicer mechanic arts, that require the earneſt attention of the artiſt, do generally contract a fixedneſs of feature ſuited to that one uniform ſentiment which engroſſes them while at work. Whereas, other artiſts, whoſe work requires leſs attention, and who may ply their trade and amuſe themſelves with converſation at the ſame time, have for the moſt

part

part ſmoother and more unmeaning faces: their thoughts are more miſcellaneous, and therefore their features are leſs fixed in one uniform configuration. A keen penetrating look indicates thoughtfulneſs and ſpirit: a dull torpid countenance is not often accompanied with great ſagacity.

This, though there may be many an exception, is in general true of the viſible ſigns of our paſſions; and it is no leſs true of the audible. A man habitually peeviſh, or paſſionate, or querulous, or imperious, may be known by the ſound of his voice, as well as by his phyſiognomy. May we not go a ſtep farther, and ſay, that if a man under the influence of any paſſion were to compoſe a diſcourſe, or a poem, or a tune, his work would in ſome meaſure exhibit an image of his mind? I could not eaſily be perſuaded, that Swift and Juvenal were men of ſweet tempers; or that Thomſon, Arbuthnot, and Prior were ill-natured. The airs of Felton are ſo uniformly mournful, that I cannot ſuppoſe him to have been a merry, or even a chearful man. If a muſician, in deep affliction, were to attempt to compoſe a lively air, I believe he would not ſucceed: though I confeſs I do not well underſtand the nature of the connection that may take place between a mournful mind and a melancholy tune. It is eaſy to conceive, how a poet or an orator ſhould transfuſe his paſſions into his work: for every paſſion ſuggeſts ideas

congenial to its own nature; and the compoſition of the poet, or of the orator, muſt neceſſarily conſiſt of thoſe ideas that occur at the time he is compoſing. But muſical ſounds are not the ſigns of ideas; rarely are they even the imitations of natural ſounds: ſo that I am at a loſs to conceive how it ſhould happen, that a muſician, overwhelmed with ſorrow, for example, ſhould put together a ſeries of notes, whoſe expreſſion is contrary to that of another ſeries which he had put together when elevated with joy. But of the fact I am not doubtful; though I have not ſagacity, or knowledge of muſic, enough to be able to explain it. And my opinion in this matter is warranted by that of a more competent judge; who ſays, ſpeaking of church-voluntaries, that if the Organiſt "do not feel in himſelf the divine energy of "devotion, he will labour in vain to raiſe it "in others. Nor can he hope to throw "out thoſe happy inſtantaneous thoughts, "which ſometimes far exceed the beſt con-"certed compoſitions, and which the en-"raptured performer would gladly ſecure "to his future uſe and pleaſure, did they "not as fleetly eſcape as they ariſe *." A man who has made muſic the ſtudy of his life, and is well acquainted with all the beſt examples of ſtyle and expreſſion that are to be found in the works of former maſters,

* Aviſon on Muſical Expreſſion, pag. 88. 89.

may,

may, by memory and much practice, attain a ſort of mechanical dexterity in contriving muſic ſuitable to any given paſſion; but ſuch muſic would, I preſume, be vulgar and ſpiritleſs, compared to what an artiſt of genius throws out, when under the power of any ardent emotion. It is recorded of Lulli, that, once when his imagination was all on fire with ſome verſes deſcriptive of terrible ideas, which he had been reading in a French tragedy, he ran to his harpſichord, and ſtruck off ſuch a combination of ſounds, that the company felt their hair ſtand on end with horror.

Let us therefore ſuppoſe it proved, or, if youpleaſe, take it for granted, that different ſentiments in the mind of the muſician will give different and peculiar expreſſions to his muſic; — and upon this principle, it will not perhaps be impoſſible to account for ſome of the phenomena of a national ear.

The highlands of Scotland are a picturesque, but in general a melancholy country. Long tracts of mountainous deſert, covered with dark heath, and often obſcured by miſty weather; narrow vallies, thinly inhabited, and bounded by precipices reſounding with the fall of torrents; a ſoil ſo rugged, and a climate ſo dreary, as in many parts to admit neither the amuſements of paſturage, nor the labours of agriculture; the mournful daſhing of waves along the friths and lakes that interſect the country; the portentous

tentous noiſes which every change of the wind, and every increaſe and diminution of the waters, is apt to raiſe, in a lonely region, full of echoes, and rocks, and caverns; the groteſque and ghaſtly appearance of ſuch a landſcape by the light of the moon: — objects like theſe diffuſe a gloom over the fancy, which may be compatible enough with occaſional and ſocial merriment, but cannot fail to tincture the thoughts of a native in the hour of ſilence and ſolitude. If theſe people, notwithſtanding their reformation in religion, and more frequent intercourſe with ſtrangers, do ſtill retain many of their old ſuperſtitions, we need not doubt but in former times they muſt have been much more enſlaved to the horrors of imagination, when beſet with the bugbears of Popery, and the darkneſs of Paganiſm. Moſt of their ſuperſtitions are of a melancholy caſt. That *Second Sight*, wherewith ſome of them are ſtill ſuppoſed to be haunted, is conſidered by themſelves as a misfortune, on account of the many dreadful images it is ſaid to obtrude upon the fancy. I have been told, that the inhabitants of ſome of the Alpine regions do likewiſe lay claim to a ſort of ſecond ſight. Nor is it wonderful, that perſons of lively imagination, immured in deep ſolitude, and ſurrounded with the ſtupendous ſcenery of clouds, precipices, and torrents, ſhould dream, even when they think themſelves awake, of thoſe few ſtriking ideas

ideas with which their lonely lives are diverſified; of corpſes, funeral proceſſions, and other objects of terror; or of marriages, and the arrival of ſtrangers, and ſuch like matters of more agreeable curioſity *. Let it be obſerved

* I do not find ſufficient evidence for the reality of *ſecond ſight*, or at leaſt of what is commonly underſtood by that term. A treatiſe on the ſubject was publiſhed in the year 1762, in which many tales were told of perſons, whom the author believed to have been favoured, or haunted, with theſe illuminations; but moſt of the tales were trifling and ridiculous: and the whole work betrayed on the part of the compiler ſuch extreme credulity, as could not fail to prejudice many readers againſt his ſyſtem. — That any of theſe viſionaries are liable to be ſwayed in their declarations by ſiniſter views, I will not ſay; though a gentleman of character aſſured me, that one of them offered to ſell him this unaccountable talent for half a crown. But this I think may be ſaid with confidence, that none but ignorant people pretend to be gifted in this way. And in them it may be nothing more, perhaps, than ſhort fits of ſudden ſleep or drowſineſs attended with lively dreams, and ariſing from ſome bodily diſorder, the effect of idleneſs, low ſpirits, or a gloomy imagination. For it is admitted, even by the moſt credulous highlanders, that, as knowledge and induſtry are propagated in their country, the ſecond ſight diſappears in proportion: and nobody ever laid claim to this faculty, who was much employed in the intercourſe of ſocial life. Nor is it at all extraordinary, that one ſhould have the appearance of being awake, and ſhould even think one's ſelf ſo, during theſe fits of dozing; or that they ſhould come on ſuddenly, and while one is engaged in ſome buſineſs. The ſame thing happens to perſons much fatigued, or long kept awake, who frequently fall aſleep for a moment, or for a longer ſpace, while they are ſtanding, or walking, or riding on horſeback. Add but a lively dream to this ſlumber,

obſerved alſo, that the ancient highlanders of Scotland had hardly any other way of ſupporting

ſlumber, and (which is the frequent effect of diſeaſe) take away the conſciouſneſs of having been aſleep; and a ſuperſtitious man, who is always hearing and believing tales of ſecond ſight, may eaſily miſtake his dream for a waking viſion: which however is ſoon forgotten when no ſubſequent occurrence recals it to his memory; but which, if it ſhall be thought to reſemble any future event, exalts the poor dreamer into a highland prophet. This conceit makes him more recluſe and more melancholy than ever, and ſo feeds his diſeaſe, and multiplies his viſions; which, if they are not diſſipated by buſineſs or ſociety, may continue to haunt him as long as he lives; and which, in their progreſs through the neighbourhood, receive ſome new tincture of the marvellous from every mouth that promotes their circulation. —— As to the prophetical nature of this ſecond-ſight, it cannot be admitted at all. That the Deity ſhould work a miracle, in order to give intimation of the frivolous things that theſe tales are made up of, the arrival of a ſtranger, the nailing of a coffin, or the colour of a ſuit of cloaths; and that theſe intimations ſhould be given for no end, and to thoſe perſons only who are idle and ſolitary, who ſpeak Erſe, or who live among mountains and deſerts, — is like nothing in nature or providence that we are acquainted with; and muſt therefore, unleſs it were confirmed by ſatisfactory proof, (which is not the caſe), be rejected as abſurd and incredible. The viſions, ſuch as they are, may reaſonably enough be aſcribed to a diſtempered fancy. And that in them, as well as in our ordinary dreams, certain appearances ſhould, on ſome rare occaſions, reſemble certain events, is to be expected from the laws of chance; and ſeems to have in it nothing more marvellous or ſupernatural, than that the parrot, who deals out his ſcurrilities at random, ſhould ſometimes happen to ſalute the paſſenger by his right appellation.

ſupporting themſelves, than by hunting, fiſhing, or war, profeſſions that are continually expoſed to fatal accidents. And hence, no doubt, additional horrors would often haunt their ſolitude, and a deeper gloom overſhadow the imagination even of the hardieſt native.

But, whatever the reader may think of theſe remarks, or of their pertinency to the preſent ſubject, I am ſure I ſhall not be blamed for quoting, from a poem little known, the following very picturesque lines; which may ſhow, that what in hiſtory or philoſophy would make but an awkward figure, may ſometimes have a charming effect in poetry.

E'er ſince of old the haughty Thanes of Roſs
(So to the ſimple ſwain tradition tells)
Were wont, with clans and ready vaſſals throng'd,
To wake the bounding ſtag, or guilty wolf;
There oft is heard at midnight, or at noon,
Beginning faint, but riſing ſtill more loud
And nearer, voice of hunters and of hounds,
And horns, hoarſe-winded, blowing far and keen.
Forthwith the hubbub multiplies; the gale
Labours with wilder ſhrieks, and rifer din
Of hot purſuit; the broken cry of deer
Mangled by throttling dogs; the ſhouts of men,
And hoofs thick-beating on the hollow hill.
Sudden, the grazing heifer in the vale
Starts at the tumult, and the herdſman's ears
Tingle with inward dread. Aghaſt he eyes
The mountain's height, and all the ridges round;
Yet not one trace of living wight diſcerns:
Nor knows, o'eraw'd and trembling as he ſtands,
To what, or whom, he owes his idle fear,
To ghoſt, to witch, to fairy, or to fiend;
But wonders; and no end of wondering finds.

ALBANIA, a poem. London, 1737, folio.

What then would it be reaſonable to expect from the fanciful tribe, from the muſicians and poets, of ſuch a region? Strains, expreſſive of joy, tranquillity, or the ſofter paſſions? No: their ſtyle muſt have been better ſuited to their circumſtances. And ſo we find in fact that their muſic is. The wildeſt irregularity appears in its compoſition: the expreſſion is warlike, and melancholy, and approaches even to the terrible. ——And that their poetry is almoſt uniformly mournful, and their views of nature dark and dreary, will be allowed, by all who admit the authenticity of Oſſian; and not doubted by any who believe thoſe fragments of highland poetry to be genuine, which many old people, now alive, of that country, remember to have heard in their youth, and were then taught to refer to a pretty high antiquity.

Some of the ſouthern provinces of Scotland preſent a very different proſpect. Smooth and lofty hills covered with verdure; clear ſtreams winding through long and beautiful vallies; trees produced without culture, here ſtraggling or ſingle, and there crouding into little groves and bowers;—with other circumſtances peculiar to the diſtricts I allude to, render them fit for paſturage, and favourable to romantic leiſure and tender paſſions. Several of the old Scotch ſongs take their names from the rivulets, villages, and hills, adjoining to the Tweed near Melroſe

roſe *; a region diſtinguiſhed by many charming varieties of rural ſcenery, and which, whether we conſider the face of the country, or the genius of the people, may properly enough be termed the Arcadia of Scotland. And all theſe ſongs are ſweetly and powerfully expreſſive of love and tenderneſs, and other emotions ſuited to the tranquillity of paſtoral life.

It is a common opinion, that theſe ſongs were compoſed by David Rizzio, a muſician from Italy, the unfortunate favourite of a very unfortunate queen. But this muſt be a miſtake. The ſtyle of the Scotch muſic was fixed before his time; for many of the beſt of theſe tunes are aſcribed by tradition to a more remote period. And it is not to be ſuppoſed, that he, a foreigner, and in the latter part of his life a man of buſineſs, could have acquired or invented a ſtyle of muſical compoſition ſo different in every reſpect from that to which he had been accuſtomed in his own country. *Melody* is ſo much the characteriſtic of the Scotch tunes, that I doubt whether even baſſes were ſet to them before the preſent century; whereas, in the days of Rizzio, *Harmony* was the faſhionable ſtudy of the Italian compoſers. Paleſtina himſelf, who

* Cowdenknows, Galaſhiels, Galawater, Etterick banks, Braes of Yarrow, Buſh above Traquair, &c.

flouriſhed about two hundred and fifty years ago, and who has obtained the high title of Father of Harmony, is by a great maſter * ranked with thoſe who neglected air, and were too cloſely attached to counterpoint; and at the time when Rizzio was a ſtudent in the art, Paleſtina's muſt have been the favourite muſic in Italy. —— Beſides, though the ſtyle of the old Scotch melody has been well imitated by Mr Oſwald, and ſome other natives, I do not find that any foreigner has ever caught the true ſpirit of it. Geminiani, a great and original genius in this art, and a profeſſed admirer of the Scotch ſongs, (ſome of which he publiſhed with accompaniments), uſed to ſay, that he had blotted many a quire of paper to no purpoſe, in attempting to compoſe a ſecond ſtrain to that fine little air which in Scotland is known by the name of *The broom of Cowdenknows*. —— To all which we may add, that Taſſoni, the author of *La Secchia rapita*, ſpeaks of this muſic as well eſteemed by the Italians of his time, and aſcribes the invention of it to James King of Scotland: — which a foreigner might naturally do, as all the Scotch kings of that name, particularly the firſt, third, fourth, and fifth, were ſkilled both in muſic and poetry.

But though I admit Taſſoni's teſtimony as a proof, that the Scotch muſic is more

* Aviſon on Muſ. Expreſſion, p. 49. 51.

ancient

ancient than Rizzio, I do not think him right in what he ſays of its inventor. Nor can I acquieſce in the opinion of thoſe who give the honour of this invention to the monks of Melroſe. I rather believe, that it took its riſe among men who were real ſhepherds, and who actually felt the ſentiments and affections, whereof it is ſo very expreſſive. Rizzio may have been one of the firſt, perhaps, who made a collection of theſe ſongs; or he may have played them with more delicate touches than the Scotch muſicians of that time; or perhaps corrected the extravagance of certain paſſages;—for one is ſtruck with the regularity of ſome, as well as amuſed with the wildneſs of others:—and in all or any of thoſe caſes, it might be ſaid with truth, that the Scotch muſic is under obligations to him:—but that this ſtyle of paſtoral melody, ſo unlike the Italian, and in every reſpect ſo peculiar, ſhould have been eſtabliſhed or invented by him, is incredible; nay, (if it were worth while to aſſert any thing ſo poſitively on ſuch a ſubject), we might even ſay impoſſible.

The acknowledged and unequalled excellence of the Italian muſic, is one of thoſe phenomena of a National Taſte, that may in part be accounted for. Let us recollect ſome particulars of the hiſtory of that period, when this muſic began to recommend itſelf to general notice.

Leo the Tenth, and ſome of his immediate

diate predeceſſors, had many great vices, and ſome virtues; and we at this day feel the good effects of both: for Providence has been pleaſed, in this inſtance, as in many others, to bring good out of evil, and to accompliſh the moſt glorious purpoſes by means that ſeemed to have an oppoſite tendency. The profuſion, and other more ſcandalous qualities of Leo, were inſtrumental in haſtening forward the Reformation: to his liberality and love of art we owe the fineſt pictures, the fineſt muſical compoſitions, and ſome of the fineſt poems in the world.

The ſixteenth century does indeed great honour to Italian genius. The ambition of Alexander the Sixth, and Julius the Second, had raiſed the Papal power to higher eminence, and ſettled it on a firmer foundation, than had been known before their time. Leo, therefore, had leiſure to indulge his love of luxury and of art; and the Italians, under his adminiſtration, to cultivate the arts and ſciences, which many other favourable events conſpired to promote. Printing had been lately found out: the taking of Conſtantinople by the Turks had made a diſperſion of the learned, many of whom took refuge in Italy: Leo found, in the treaſures accumulated by Julius the Second, and in the ample revenues of the pontificate, the means both of generoſity and of debauchery: and when the Pope, and the houſes of Medici and Montefeltro, had ſet the

example,

example, it became the fashion all over Italy, to patronise genius, and encourage learning. The first efforts of a literary spirit appeared in translating the Greek authors into Latin; a tongue which every scholar was ambitious to acquire, and in which many elegant compositions, both verse and prose, were produced about this time in Italy. Fracastorius, Sanazarius, Vida, distinguished themselves in Latin poetry; Bembo, Casa, Manutius, Sigonius, in Latin prose. But genius seldom displays itself to advantage in a foreign tongue. The cultivation of the Tuscan language, since the time of Petrarcha, who flourished one hundred and fifty years before the period we speak of, had been too much neglected; but was now resumed with the most desirable success; particularly by Tasso and Ariosto, who carried the Italian poetry to its highest perfection.

The other fine arts were no less fortunate in the hands of Raphael and Palestina. What Homer was in poetry, these authors were in painting and music. Their works are still regarded as standards of good taste, and models for imitation: and though improvement may no doubt have been made since their time, in some inferior branches of their respective arts, particularly in what regards delicacy of manner; it may with reason be doubted, whether in grandeur of design, and strength of invention, they have as yet been excelled or equalled. Greece owed much of her

her literary glory to the merit of her ancient authors. They at once fixed the fashion in the several kinds of writing; and they happened to fix it on the immoveable basis of simplicity and nature. Had not the Italian music in its infant state fallen into the hands of a great genius like Palestina, it would not have arrived at maturity so soon. A long succession of inferior composers might have made discoveries in the art, but could not have raised it above mediocrity: and such people are not of influence enough to render a new art respectable in the eyes, either of the learned, or of the vulgar. But Palestina made his art an object of admiration, not only to his own country, but to a great part of Europe. In England he was studied and imitated by Tallis, in the reign of Henry the Eighth. All good judges were satisfied, that this system of harmony was founded on right principles; and that, though it might perhaps be improved, nothing in the art could be a real improvement, which was contradictory to it.

In the age of Leo, a genius like Palestina must have been distinguished, even though the art he professed had gratified no important principle of the human mind; but as his art gratified the religious principle, he could not fail, in those days, and among Italians, to meet with the highest encouragement. In fact, music since that time has been cultivated in Italy with the utmost at-

tention and ſucceſs. Scarlatti, Corelli, Geminiani, Martini, Marcello, were all men of extraordinary abilities; and any one of them, in the circumſtances of Paleſtina, might perhaps have been as eminent as he. Need we wonder, then, at the unequalled excellence of the Italian muſic?

But other cauſes have contributed to this effect. Nobody who underſtands the language of modern Italy, will deny, that the natives have a peculiar delicacy of perception in regard to vocal ſound. This delicacy appears in the ſweetneſs of their verſe, in the cadence of their proſe, and even in the formation and inflexion of their words. Whether it be owing to the climate, or to the influence of the other arts; whether it be derived from their Gothic anceſtors, or from their more remote forefathers of ancient Rome; whether it be the effect of weakneſs or of ſoundneſs in the vocal and auditory organs of the people, this national niceneſs of ear muſt be conſidered as one cauſe of the melody both of their ſpeech and of their muſic. They are miſtaken who think the Italian an effeminate language. Soft it is indeed, and of eaſy modulation, but ſuſceptible withal of the utmoſt dignity of ſound, as well as of elegant arrangement and nervous phraſeology. In hiſtory and oratory, it may boaſt of many excellent models: and its poetry is far ſuperior to that of every other modern nation, except the Engliſh.

And if it be true, that all music is originally song, the most poetical nation would seem to have the fairest chance to become the most musical. The Italian tongue, in strength and variety of harmony, is not superior, and perhaps not equal, to the English; but, abounding more in vowels and liquid sounds, and being therefore more easily articulated, is fitter for the purposes of music: and it deserves our notice, that poetical numbers were brought to perfection in Italy two hundred years sooner than in any other country of modern Europe.

CHAP. VII.

Of Sympathy.

AS a great part of the pleasure we derive from poetry depends on our Sympathetic Feelings, the philosophy of Sympathy ought always to form a part of the science of Criticism. On this subject, therefore, I beg leave to subjoin a few brief remarks, that may possibly throw light on some of the foregoing, as well as subsequent reasonings.

When we consider the condition of another person, especially if it seem to be pleasurable or painful, we are apt to fancy ourselves

ourſelves in the ſame condition, and to feel in ſome degree the pain or pleaſure that we think we ſhould feel if we were really in that condition. Hence the good of others becomes in ſome meaſure our good, and their evil our evil; the obvious effect of which is, to bind men more cloſely together in ſociety, and prompt them to promote the good, and relieve the diſtreſſes, of one another. Sympathy with diſtreſs is called Compaſſion or Pity: Sympathy with happineſs has no particular name; but, when expreſſed in words to the happy perſon, is termed Congratulation.

We ſympathiſe, in ſome degree, even with things inanimate. To loſe a ſtaff we have long worn, to ſee in ruins a houſe in which we have long lived, may affect us with a momentary concern, though in point of value the loſs be nothing. With the dead we ſympathiſe, and even with thoſe circumſtances of their condition whereof we know that they are utterly inſenſible; ſuch as, their being ſhut up in a cold and ſolitary grave, excluded from the light of the ſun, and from all the pleaſures of life, and liable in a few years to be forgotten for ever. —— Towards the brute creation our ſympathy is, and ought to be, ſtrong, they being percipient creatures like ourſelves. A merciful man is merciful to his beaſt; and that perſon would be deemed melancholy or hard-hearted, who ſhould ſee the friſking

lamb, or hear the chearful ſong of the lark, or obſerve the tranſport of the dog when he finds the maſter he had loſt, without any participation of their joy. There are few paſſages of deſcriptive poetry into which we enter with a more hearty fellow-feeling, than where Virgil and Lucretius paint ſo admirably, the one the ſorrow of a ſteer for the loſs of his fellow, the other the affliction of a cow deprived of her calf *.——But our ſympathy exerts itſelf moſt powerfully towards our fellow-men: and, other circumſtances being equal, is ſtronger or weaker, according as they are more or leſs nearly connected with us, and their condition more or leſs ſimilar to our own.

We often ſympathiſe with one another, when the perſon principally concerned has little ſenſe of either good or evil. We bluſh for another's ill-breeding, even when we know that he himſelf is not aware of it. We pity a madman, though we believe him to be happy in his phrenſy. We tremble for a maſon ſtanding on a high ſcaffold, though we know that cuſtom has made it quite familiar to him. It gives us pain to ſee another on the brink of a precipice, tho' we be ſecure ourſelves, and have no doubt of his circumſpection. In theſe caſes, it would ſeem, that our ſympathy is raiſed,

* Virgil, Georg. iii. verſ. 519.; Lucretius, ii. verſ. 355.

not

not so much by our reflecting on what others really feel, as by a lively conception of what they would feel if their nature were exactly such as ours; or of what we ourselves should feel, if we were in their condition, with the same sentiments we have at present *.

Many of our passions may be communicated and strengthened by sympathy. If we go into a chearful company, we become chearful; if into a mournful one, we become sad. The presence of a great multitude engaged in devotion, tends to make us devout. Cowards have behaved valiantly, when all their companions were valiant; and the timidity of a few has struck a panic into a whole army. —— We are not, however, much inclined to sympathise with violent anger, jealousy, envy, malevolence, and other sanguinary or unnatural passions: we rather take part against them, and sympathise with those persons who are in danger from them; because we can more easily enter into their distress, and suppose ourselves in their condition. But indignation at vice, particularly at ingratitude, cruelty, treachery, and the like, when we are well acquainted with the case, awakens in us a most intense fellow-feeling: and the satisfaction we are conscious of, when such crimes are ade-

* See Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments, sect 1.

quately

quately punished, though somewhat stern and gloomy, is however sincere, and by no means dishonourable or detrimental to our moral nature; nor at all inconsistent with that pity, which the sufferings of the criminal extort from us, when we are made to conceive them in a lively manner.

Of sympathy all men are not equally susceptible. They who have a lively imagination, keen feelings, and what we call a tender heart, are most subject to it. Habits of attention, the study of the works of nature, and of the best performances in art, experience of adversity, the love of virtue and of mankind, tend greatly to cherish it; and those passions whereof self is the object, as pride, self-conceit, the love of money, sensuality, envy, vanity, have a tendency no less powerful to destroy it. Nothing renders a man more amiable, or more useful, than a disposition to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with those that weep; to enter heartily, not officiously, into the concerns of his fellow-creatures; to comply with the innocent humour of his company, more attentive to them than to himself, and to avoid every occasion of giving pain or offence. And nothing but downright immorality is more disagreeable, than that person is, who affects bluntness of manner, and would be thought at all times to speak all that he thinks, whether people take it well or ill; or than those pedants are, of whatever

ever profeſſion, (for we have them of all profeſſions), who, without minding others, or entering into their views of things, are continually obtruding themſelves upon the converſation, and their own concerns, and the ſentiments and language peculiar to their own trades and fraternities. This behaviour, though under the name of plain-dealing it may arrogate a ſuperiority to artificial rules, is generally the effect of pride, ignorance, or ſtupidity, or rather of all the three in conjunction. A modeſt man, who ſympathetically attends to the condition and ſentiments of others, will of his own accord make thoſe allowances in their favour, which he wiſhes to be made in his own; and will think it as much his duty to promote their happineſs, as he thinks it theirs to promote his. And ſuch a man is well principled in equity, as well as in good-breeding: and though, from an imperfect knowledge of forms, or from his having had but few opportunities to put them in practice, his manner may not be ſo graceful, or ſo eaſy, as could be wiſhed, he will never give offence to any perſon of penetration and good-nature.

With feelings which we do not approve, or not have experienced, we are not apt to ſympathiſe. The diſtreſs of the miſer when his hoard is ſtolen, of the fop when he ſoils his fine jubilee cloaths, of the vaunting coxcomb when his lies are detected, of the unnatural parent when his daughter eſcapes with

with a deſerving lover, is more likely to move laughter than compaſſion. At Sparta, every father had the privilege of correcting any child; he who had experience of paternal tenderneſs being ſuppoſed incapable of wounding a parent's ſenſibility by unjuſt or rigorous chaſtiſement. When the Cardinal of Milan would expoſtulate with the Lady Conſtance upon her violent ſorrow for the loſs of her child, ſhe anſwers, but without deigning to addreſs her anſwer to one who ſhe knew could be no competent judge of her caſe, "He ſpeaks to me who "never had a ſon *." —— The Greeks and Romans were as eminent for public ſpirit, and for parental affection, as we; but, for a reaſon elſewhere aſſigned †, knew little of that romantic love between unmarried perſons, which modern manners and novels have a tendency to inſpire. Accordingly the diſtreſs in their tragedies often aroſe from patriotiſm, and from the conjugal and filial charities, but not from the romantic paſſion whereof we now ſpeak. But there are few Engliſh tragedies, and ſtill fewer French, wherein ſome love-affair is not connected with the plot. This always raiſes our ſympathy; but would not have been ſo intereſting to the Greeks or Romans, becauſe they

* King John, act 3. ſcene 3.

† Eſſay on Laughter, chap. 4.

were not much acquainted with the refinements of this paſſion.

Sympathy, as the means of conveying certain feelings from one breaſt to another, might be made a powerful inſtrument of moral diſcipline, if poets, and other writers of fable, were careful to call forth our ſenſibility towards thoſe emotions only that favour virtue, and invigorate the human mind. Fictions, that breathe the ſpirit of patriotiſm or valour; that make us ſympathiſe with the parental, conjugal, or filial charities; that recommend misfortune to our pity, or expoſe crimes to our abhorrence, may certainly be uſeful in a moral view, by cheriſhing paſſions, that, while they improve the heart, can hardly be indulged to exceſs. But thoſe dreadful tales, that only give anguiſh to the reader, can never do any good: they fatigue, enervate, and overwhelm the ſoul: and when the calamities they deſcribe are made to fall upon the innocent, our moral principles are in ſome danger of a temporary depravation from the peruſal, whatever reſemblance the fable may be ſuppoſed to bear to the events of real life. Some late authors of fiction ſeem to have thought it incumbent upon them, not only to touch the heart, but to tear it in pieces. They heap "misfortune on misfortune, "grief on grief," without end, and without mercy: which diſcompoſes the reader too much to give him either pleaſure or improve-

ment; and is contrary to the practice of the wiſer ancients, whoſe moſt pathetic ſcenes were generally ſhort.

It is ſaid, that at the firſt repreſentation of *the Furies* of Eſchylus, the horror of the ſpectacle was ſo great, that ſeveral women miſcarried; which was indeed pathos with a vengeance. But though the truth of that ſtory ſhould be queſtioned, it admits of no doubt, that objects of grief and horror too much enlarged on by the poet or noveliſt may do more harm than good, and give more pain than pleaſure, to the mind of the reader. Surely this muſt be contrary to the eſſential rules of art, whether we conſider poetry as intended to pleaſe that it may inſtruct, or to inſtruct that it may the more effectually pleaſe. And ſuppoſing the real evils of life to be as various and important as is commonly believed, we muſt be thought to conſult our own intereſt very abſurdly, if we ſeek to torment ourſelves with imaginary misfortune. Horace inſinuates, that the ancient *Satyric Drama* (a ſort of burleſque tragi-comedy) was contrived for the entertainment of the more diſorderly part of the audience *; and our critics aſſure us, that the modern farce is addreſſed to the upper gallery, where, it is ſuppoſed, there is no great reliſh for the ſublime graces of the Tragic Muſe. Yet I be-

* Hor. Ar. Poet. verſ. 221.

lieve

lieve these *little pieces*, if consistent with decency, will be found neither unpleasant nor unprofitable even to the most learned spectator. A man, especially if advanced in years, would not chuse to go home with that gloom upon his mind which an affecting tragedy is intended to diffuse: and if the play has conveyed any sound instruction, there is no risk of its being dissipated by a little innocent mirth.

Upon the same principle, I confess, that I am not offended with those comic scenes wherewith our great Dramatic Poet has occasionally thought proper to diversify his tragedies. Such a licence will at least be allowed to be more pardonable in him, than it would be in other Tragic poets. They must make their way to the heart, as an army does to a strong fortification, by slow and regular approaches; because they cannot, like Shakespeare, take it at once, and by storm. In their pieces, therefore, a mixture of comedy might have as bad an effect, as if besiegers were to retire from the outworks they had gained, and leave the enemy at leisure to fortify them a second time. But Shakespeare penetrates the heart by a single effort, and can make us as sad in the present scene, as if we had not been merry in the former. With such powers as he possessed in the pathetic, if he had made his tragedies uniformly mournful or terrible from beginning to end, no person of sensibility

would have been able to ſupport the repreſentation. —— As to the probability of theſe mixed compoſitions, it admits of no doubt. Nature every where preſents a ſimilar mixture of tragedy and comedy, of joy and ſorrow, of laughter and ſolemnity, in the common affairs of life. The ſervants of a court know little of what paſſes among princes and ſtateſmen, and may therefore, like the porter in Macbeth, be very jocular when their ſuperiors are in deep diſtreſs. The death of a favourite child is a great affliction to parents and friends; but the man who digs the grave may, like Goodman Delver in Hamlet, be very chearful while he is going about his work. A conſpiracy may be dangerous; but the conſtable who apprehends the traitors may, like Dogberry, be a ludicrous character, and his very abſurdities may be inſtrumental in bringing the plot to light, as well as in delaying or haſtening forward the diſcovery. —— I grant, that compoſitions, like thoſe I would now apologize for, cannot properly be called either tragedies or comedies: but the name is of no conſequence; let them be called *Plays*: and if in them nature is imitated in ſuch a way as to give pleaſure and inſtruction, they are as well entitled to the denomination of *Dramatic Poems*, as any thing in Sophocles, Racine, or Voltaire. —— But to return:

Love is another "tyrant of the throbbing "breaſt,"

" breaſt," of whom they who wiſh to ſee the ſtage transformed into a ſchool of virtue, complain, that his influence in the modern drama is too deſpotical. Love, kept within due bounds, is no doubt, as the ſong ſays, " a gentle and a generous paſ- " ſion ;" but no other paſſion has ſo ſtrong a tendency to tranſgreſs the due bounds : and the frequent contemplation of its various ardours and agonies, as exhibited in plays and novels, can ſcarce fail to enervate the mind, and to raiſe emotions and ſympathies unfriendly to innocence. And certain it is, that fables in which there is neither love nor gallantry, may be made highly intereſting even to the fancy and affections of a modern reader. This appears, not only from the writings of Shakeſpeare, and other great authors, but from the *Pilgrim's Progreſs* of Bunyan, and the hiſtory of Robinſon Cruſoe : than which laſt, there is not perhaps in any language a more intereſting narrative ; or a tale better contrived for communicating to the reader a lively idea of the importance of the mechanic arts, of the ſweets of ſocial life, and of the dignity of independence.

PART

PART II.

OF THE LANGUAGE OF POETRY.

HAVING finiſhed what I intended to ſay on the general nature of Poetry, as an Imitative Art, I proceed to conſider the INSTRUMENT which it employs in its imitations; or, in other words, to explain the General Nature of POETIC LANGUAGE. For *language* is the poet's inſtrument of imitation, as *ſound* is the muſician's, and *colour* the painter's. My concluſions on this part of the ſubject will be found to terminate in the principles already laid down.

Words in Poetry are choſen, firſt, for their *ſenſe*; and, ſecondly, for their *ſound*. That the firſt of theſe grounds of choice is the more excellent, nobody can deny. He who in literary matters prefers ſound to ſenſe, is a fool. Yet ſound is to be attended to, even in proſe; and in verſe demands particular attention.

attention. I ſhall conſider Poetical Language, firſt, as SIGNIFICANT; and, ſecondly, as SUSCEPTIBLE OF HARMONY.

CHAP. I.

Of Poetical Language, conſidered as ſignificant.

IF, as I have endeavoured to prove, Poetry be imitative of Nature, poetical fictions of real events, poetical images of real appearances in the viſible creation, and poetical perſonages of real human characters; it would ſeem to follow, that the *language of Poetry* muſt be an imitation of the *language of Nature*. For nothing but what is ſuppoſed to be natural can pleaſe; and language, as well as fable, imagery, and moral deſcription, may diſpleaſe, by being unnatural.—— What then is meant by *Natural Language?* This comes to be our firſt inquiry.

SECT.

SECT. I.

An idea of Natural Language.

THE term *Natural Language* has ſometimes been uſed by philoſophers to denote thoſe tones of the human voice, attitudes of the body, and configurations of the features, which, being *naturally* expreſſive of certain emotions of the ſoul, are univerſal among mankind, and every where underſtood. Thus anger, fear, pity, adoration, joy, contempt, and almoſt every other paſſion, has a look, attitude, and tone of voice, peculiar to itſelf; which would ſeem to be the effect, not of men imitating one another, but of the ſoul operating upon the body; and which, when well expreſſed in a picture or ſtatue, or when it appears in human behaviour, is underſtood by all mankind, as the external ſign of that paſſion which it is for the moſt part obſerved to accompany. In this acceptation, *natural language* is contradiſtinguiſhed to thoſe articulate voices to which the name of *ſpeech* has been appropriated; and which are alſo univerſal among mankind, though different in different nations; but derive all their meaning from human compact and *artifice*, and are not underſtood except by

thoſe who have been inſtructed in the uſe of them. — But in this inquiry the term *Natural Language* denotes that uſe of ſpeech, or of *artificial language*, which is ſuitable to the ſpeaker and to the occaſion. "Proper "words in proper places," is Swift's definition of a good ſtyle; and may with equal propriety, ſerve for a definition of that ſtyle, or mode of language, which is here called *Natural*, in contradiſtinction, not to *artificial* (itſelf being artificial) but to *unnatural;* and which it is the poet's buſineſs to imitate. I ſay, *to imitate:* for as poets (for a reaſon already given) copy nature, not as it is, but in that ſtate of perfection, wherein, conſiſtently with veriſimilitude, and with the genius of their work, it may be ſuppoſed to be; and are therefore ſaid to *imitate* nature, that is, to give a view of nature ſimilar to, but ſomewhat different from the reality: — ſo, in forming poetical language, they muſt take for their model human ſpeech, not in that imperfect ſtate wherein it is uſed on the common occaſions of life, but in that ſtate of perfection, whereof, conſiſtently with veriſimilitude, it may be ſuppoſed to be ſuſceptible.

But, as we cannot eſtimate the perfection or imperfection of poetical imagery, till we know the natural appearance of the thing deſcribed; ſo neither can we judge of this perfection of human ſpeech, till we have formed ſome idea of that quality of language which we expreſs by the epithet *natural*.

That ſome modes of language are more natural than others, and that one mode may be natural at one time which at another would be unnatural, muſt be evident even to thoſe who never ſtudied criticiſm. Would ſoft words, for example, be natural in the mouth of a very angry man? or do even the vulgar expect bluſtering expreſſions from him who melts with pity, or love, or ſorrow? Between groans and pain, tears and grief, laughter and jocularity, trembling and fear, the connection is not more natural, than between certain ſentiments of the human mind and certain modifications of human language.

Natural language and *good* language are not the ſame: and Swift's definition, which is equally applicable to both, will not perhaps be found to expreſs adequately the characteriſtic of either. The qualities of good language are perſpicuity, ſimplicity, elegance, energy, and harmony. But language may poſſeſs all theſe qualities, and yet not be natural. Would the Anacreontic or Ovidian ſimplicity be natural in the mouth of Achilles upbraiding Agamemnon with his tyranny and injuſtice; or of Lear defying the tempeſtuous elements, and imprecating perdition upon his daughters? Would that perſpicuity which we juſtly admire in Cato's ſoliloquy *, be accounted natural in Ham-

* It muſt be ſo. Plato, thou reaſon'ſt well, &c.

let's

let's *, by thoſe who know, that the former is ſuppoſed to ſpeak with the rationality of a philoſopher, and the latter with the agitation of a young man tortured to madneſs with ſorrow, and love, diſappointment, and revenge? Would language ſo magnificent as that in which the ſublime Othello ſpeaks of the pomps and honours of war, be natural in the mouth of the ſoft, the humble, the broken-hearted Deſdemona bewailing her unhappy fate? Or would the ſonorous harmony of the Dithyrambic ſong, or Epic poem, ſuit the ſimplicity of ſhepherds, contending in alternate verſe, and praiſing their miſtreſſes, putting forth riddles, or making remarks upon the weather? — Yet language muſt always be ſo far ſimple as to have no ſuperfluous decoration; ſo far perſpicuous, as to let us ſee clearly what is meant; and ſo far elegant, as to give no ground to ſuſpect the author of ignorance, or want of taſte.

Good language is determinate and abſolute. We know it where-ever we meet with it; we may learn to ſpeak and write it from books alone. Whether pronounced by a clown or a hero, a wiſe man or an idiot, language is ſtill good if it be according to rule. But natural language is ſomething not abſolute but relative; and can be eſtimated by thoſe only, who have ſtudied men as well

* To be, or not to be, &c.

as books; and who attend to the real or ſuppoſed character of the ſpeaker, as well as to the import of what is ſpoken.

There are ſeveral particulars relating to the ſpeaker which we muſt attend to, before we can judge whether his expreſſion be natural.—It is obvious, that his *temper* muſt be taken into the account. From the fiery and paſſionate we expect one ſort of language, from the calm and moderate another. That impetuoſity which is natural in Achilles, would in Sarpedon or Ulyſſes be quite the contrary; as the mellifluent copiouſneſs of Neſtor would ill become the blunt ruſticity of Ajax. Thoſe diverſities of temper, which make men think differently on the ſame occaſion, will alſo make them ſpeak the ſame thoughts in a different manner. And as the temper of the ſame man is not always uniform, but is variouſly affected by youth and old age, and by the prevalence of temporary paſſions; ſo neither will that ſtyle which is moſt natural to him be always uniform, but may be energetic or languid, abrupt or equable, figurative or plain, according to the paſſions or ſentiments that may happen to predominate in his mind. And hence, to judge whether his language be natural, we muſt attend, not only to the habitual temper, but alſo to the *preſent paſſions*, and even to the *age* of the ſpeaker.—Nor ſhould we overlook his *intellectual peculiarities*. If his thoughts be confuſed or indiſtinct, his ſtyle muſt

muſt be immethodical and obſcure; if the former be much diverſified, the latter will be equally copious.—The *external circumſtances* of the ſpeaker, his rank and fortune, his education and company, particularly the two laſt, have no little influence in characteriſing his ſtyle. A clown and a man of learning, a pedantic and a polite ſcholar, a huſbandman and a ſoldier, a mechanic and a ſeaman, reciting the ſame narrative, will, each of them, adopt a peculiar mode of expreſſion, ſuitable to the ideas that occupy his mind, and to the language he has been accuſtomed to ſpeak and hear: and if a poet, who had occaſion to introduce theſe characters in a comedy, were to give the ſame uniform colour of language to them all, the ſtyle of that comedy, however elegant, would be unnatural. —Our language is alſo affected by the very thoughts we utter. When theſe are lofty or groveling, there is a correſpondent elevation or meanneſs in the language. The ſtyle of a great man is generally ſimple, but ſeldom fails to partake of the dignity and energy of his ſentiments. In Greece and Rome, the corruption of literature was a conſequence of the corruption of manners; and the manly ſimplicity of the old writers diſappeared, as the nation became effeminate and ſervile. Horace and Longinus * ſcruple

* Hor. Ar. Poet. verſ. 323.—332. Longinus, ſect. 9. 44.

not

not to aſcribe the decline of eloquence, in their days, to a littleneſs of mind, the effect of avarice and luxury. The words of Longinus are remarkable. "The truly eloquent "(ſays he) muſt poſſeſs an exalted and noble "mind; for it is not poſſible for thoſe who "have all their lives been employed in ſervile purſuits, to produce any thing worthy "of immortal renown or general admiration." In fact, our words not only are the ſigns, but may be conſidered as the pictures of our thoughts. The ſame glow or faintneſs of colouring, the ſame conſiſtency or incoherence, the ſame proportions of great and little, the ſame degrees of elevation, the ſame light and ſhade, that diſtinguiſh the one, will be found to characteriſe the other: and from ſuch a character as Achilles or Othello we as naturally expect a bold, nervous, and animated phraſeology, as a manly voice and commanding geſture.—It is hardly neceſſary to add, that ſtyle, in order to be natural, muſt be adapted to the *ſex* and to the *nation* of the ſpeaker. Theſe circumſtances give a peculiarity to human thought, and muſt therefore diverſify the modes of human language. I will not ſay, as ſome have done, that a lady is always diſtinguiſhable by her ſtyle and handwriting, as well as by her voice and features; but I believe it may be truly ſaid, that female converſation, even when learned or philoſophical, has, for the moſt part, an eaſe and

and a delicacy, which the greateſt maſters of language would find it difficult to imitate. The ſtyle that Shakeſpeare has given to Juliet's nurſe, Mrs Quickly, Deſdemona, or Katharine, would not ſuit any male; nor the phraſeology of Dogberry or Petruchio, Piſtol or Falſtaff, any female character. National peculiarities are alſo to be attended to by thoſe who ſtudy natural language in its full extent. We ſhould expect a copious and flowery ſtyle from an Aſiatic monarch, and a conciſe and figurative expreſſion from an American chief. A French marquis, and a country-gentleman of England, would not uſe the ſame phraſes on the ſame ſubject, even though they were ſpeaking the ſame language with equal fluency. And a *valet-de-chambre* newly imported from Paris, or a Scotch footman who had been born and bred in Edinburgh, appearing in an Engliſh comedy, would be cenſured as an unnatural character, if the poet were to make him ſpeak pure Engliſh.

May we not infer, from what has been ſaid, that "Language is then according to "nature, when it is ſuitable to the ſuppoſed "condition of the ſpeaker?"—meaning by the word *condition*, not only the outward circumſtances of *fortune*, *rank*, *employment*, *ſex*, *age*, and *nation*, but alſo the internal temperature of the *underſtanding* and *paſſions*, as well as the peculiar nature of the *thoughts* that may happen to occupy the mind. Horace

race ſeems to have had this in view, when he ſaid, that "if what is ſpoken on the ſtage "ſhall be unſuitable to the *fortunes* of the "ſpeaker, both the learned and unlearned "part of the audience will be ſenſible of the "impropriety:—For that it is of great "importance to the poet to conſider, whe-"ther the perſon ſpeaking be a ſlave or a "hero; a man of mature age, or warm "with the paſſions of youth; a lady of rank, "or a buſtling nurſe; a luxurious Aſſyrian, "or a cruel native of Colchis; a mercantile "traveller, or a ſtationary huſbandman; "an acute Argive, or a dull Beotian *."

But Horace's remark, it may be ſaid, refers more immediately to the ſtyle of the drama; whereas we would extend it to poetry, and even to compoſition, in general. And it may be thought, that in thoſe writings wherein the imitation of human life is leſs perfect, as in the Epic poem, or wherein the ſtyle is uniformly elevated and pure, as in Hiſtory and Tragedy, this rule of language is not attended to. In what reſpect, for example, can the ſtyle of Livy or Homer be ſaid to be ſuitable to the condition of the ſpeaker? Have we not, in each author, a great variety of ſpeeches, aſcribed to men of different nations, ranks, and characters; who are all, notwithſtanding, made to utter a language, that is not only grammatical,

* Hor. Ar. Poet. verſ. 112.

but elegant and harmonious? Yet no reader is offended; and no critic ever ſaid, that the ſtyle of Homer or Livy is unnatural.

The objection is plauſible. But a right examination of it will be found not to weaken, but to confirm and illuſtrate the preſent doctrine. I ſay, then, that language is natural, when it is ſuited to the ſuppoſed condition and circumſtances of the ſpeaker.—Now, in hiſtory, the ſpeaker is no other than the hiſtorian himſelf; who claims the privilege of telling his tale in his own way; and of expreſſing the thoughts of other men, where he has occaſion to record them, in his own language. All this we muſt allow to be natural, if we ſuppoſe him to be ſerious. For every man, who ſpeaks without affectation, has a ſtyle and a manner peculiar to himſelf. A perſon of learning and eloquence, recapitulating on any ſolemn occaſion the ſpeech of a clown, would not be thought in earneſt if he did not expreſs himſelf with his wonted propriety. It would be difficult, perhaps he would find it impoſſible, to imitate the heſitation, barbariſms, and broad accent, of the poor man; and if he were to do ſo, he would affront his audience, and, inſtead of being thought a natural ſpeaker, or capable of conducting important buſineſs, would prove himſelf a mere buffoon. Now an hiſtorian is a perſon who aſſumes a character of great dignity, and addreſſes himſelf to a moſt reſpectable audi-

ence. He undertakes to communicate information, not to his equals only or inferiors, but to the greateſt, and moſt learned men upon earth. He wiſhes them to liſten to him, and to liſten with pleaſure, to believe his teſtimony, and treaſure up his ſayings as leſſons of wiſdom, to direct them in the conduct of life, and in the government of kingdoms. In ſo awful a preſence, and with views ſo elevated, what ſtyle is it natural for him to aſſume? A ſtyle uniformly ſerious, and elegant, clear, orderly, and emphatical, ſet off with modeſt ornaments to render it pleaſing, yet plain and ſimple, and ſuch as becomes a man whoſe chief concern it is to know and deliver the truth. The moraliſt and the preacher are in ſimilar circumſtances, and will naturally adopt a ſimilar ſtyle: only a more ſublime and more pathetic energy, and language ſtill plainer than that of the hiſtorian, though not leſs pure, will with reaſon be expected from thoſe, who pronounce the dictates of divine wiſdom, and profeſs to inſtruct the meaneſt, as well as the greateſt of mankind, in matters of everlaſting importance.

When a man, for the public amuſement, aſſumes any character, it is not neceſſary, nor poſſible, for him to impoſe upon us ſo far as to make us believe him to be the very perſon he repreſents: but we have a right to expect that his behaviour ſhall not belie his pretenſions in any thing material. With all his

his powers of incantation, Garrick himſelf will never be able to charm us into a belief, that he is really Macbeth: all that can be done he does; he ſpeaks and acts juſt as if he were that perſon: and this is all that the public requires of him. Were he to fall ſhort,—or rather (for we need not ſuppoſe what will never happen)—were any other tragedian to fall ſhort of our expectations, and plead, by way of excuſe, that truly he was neither a king nor a traitor, neither an ambitious nor a valiant man, and therefore ought not to be blamed for not acting as becomes one; we ſhould more eaſily pardon the fault, than the apology.—Now it is very true, that an Epic poet is no more inſpired than any other writer, and perhaps was never ſeriouſly believed to be ſo. But as he lays claim to inſpiration; and before the whole world profeſſes to diſplay the moſt intereſting and moſt marvellous events, to be particularly informed in regard to the thoughts as well as actions of men, and to know the affairs of inviſible beings and the economy of unſeen worlds; we have a right to expect from him a language as much elevated above that of hiſtory and philoſophy, as his aſſumed character and pretenſions are higher than thoſe of the hiſtorian and philoſopher. From ſuch a man, ſuppoſed to be inveſted with ſuch a character, we have indeed a right to require every poſſible perfection of human thought and language. And

therefore, if he were to introduce mean perſons talking in their own dialect, it would be as unnatural, as if a great orator, on the moſt ſolemn occaſion, were to liſp and prattle like a child; or a hero to addreſs his victorious army in the jargon of a gypſy or pickpocket.

In the Epopee, the Muſe, or rather the Poet, is ſuppoſed to ſpeak from beginning to end; the incidental orations aſcribed to Therſites or Neſtor, to Ulyſſes or Polypheme, to Aſcanius or Eneas, to Satan or Raphael, not being delivered, as in tragedy, by the ſeveral ſpeakers in their own perſons, but rehearſed by the poet in the way of narrative. Theſe orations, therefore, muſt not only be adapted to the characters of thoſe to whom they are aſcribed, and to the occaſion upon which they are ſpoken, but muſt alſo partake of the ſuppoſed dignity of the poet's character. And if ſo, they muſt be elevated to the general pitch of the compoſition: even though they be ſaid to have been uttered by perſons from whom, in common life, elegance of ſtyle would not have been expected. And a certain degree of the ſame elevation muſt adhere to every deſcription in Epic poetry, though the thing deſcribed ſhould be comparatively unimportant: — which is no more than we naturally look for, when an eloquent man, in a ſolemn aſſembly, gives a detail of ordinary events, or recapitulates, in his own ſtyle and manner, the ſentiments of

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an illiterate peaſant. So that in the Epic poem, (and in all ſerious poetry, narrative or didactic, wherein the poet is the ſpeaker), language, in order to be natural, muſt be ſuited to the aſſumed or ſuppoſed character of the poet, as well as to the occaſion and ſubject. Polyphemus, in a farce or comedy, might ſpeak clowniſhly; becauſe he there appears in perſon, and ruſticity is his character: but Homer and Virgil, rehearſing a ſpeech of Polyphemus, would indeed deliver thoughts ſuitable to his character and condition, but would expreſs them in their own elegant and harmonious language. —— And hence we ſee, how abſurdly thoſe critics argue, who blame Virgil for making Eneas *too poetical* (as they are pleaſed to phraſe it) in the account he gives Dido of his adventures. They might with equal reaſon affirm, that every perſon in the Iliad and Odyſſey, as well as Eneid, ſpeaks too poetically. The miſtake ariſes from confounding Epic with Dramatic compoſition, and ſuppoſing that the heroes both of the one and of the other ſpeak in their own perſons. Whereas, in the firſt the poet is the only ſpeaker, and in the laſt he never ſpeaks at all: nay, the firſt is nothing more, from beginning to end, but a narration, or ſpeech, delivered by a perſon aſſuming, and pretending to ſupport, the character of an inſpired poet. In the ſtyle, therefore, of the Epopee, the poetic character muſt every where

where predominate, as well as the heroic; becauſe a ſpeech, in order to appear natural, muſt be ſuited to the ſuppoſed character of the ſpeaker, as well as to the things and perſons ſpoken of.

The puns that Milton aſcribes to his devils, on a certain occaſion *, are generally and juſtly condemned. It has, however, been urged, as an apology for them, that they are uttered by evil beings, who may be ſuppoſed to have loſt, when they fell, all taſte for elegance, as well as for virtue; and that the poet, on this one occaſion, might have intended to make them both deteſtable as devils, and deſpicable as buffoons. But this plea cannot be admitted. For the fiends of Milton, notwithſtanding their extreme wickedneſs, retain an elevation of mind, without which they could not have appeared in an Epic poem, and which is inconſiſtent with the futility of a buffoon or witling. Granting, then, (what is not likely), that the poet, in this one inſtance, meant to render them contemptible for their low wit, he muſt yet be blamed for aſſigning them a part ſo repugnant to their general character. Or, even if he could be vindicated on this ſcore, he is liable to cenſure for having put ſo paltry a part of his narration in the mouth of the holy angel Raphael. Or, if even for this we were to pardon him, ſtill he is in-

* Paradiſe Loſt, book 6. verſ. 609. — 627.

excuſeable,

excuſeable, for having forgotten the aſſumed dignity of his own character ſo far, as to retail thoſe wretched quibbles; which, whether we ſuppoſe them to be uttered by an angel, a devil, or an epic poet, are groſsly unnatural, becauſe totally unſuitable to the condition and character of the ſpeaker.—— A mind poſſeſſed with great ideas does not naturally attend to ſuch as are trifling *; and, while actuated by admiration, and other important emotions, will not be apt to turn its view to thoſe things that provoke contempt or laughter. Such we ſuppoſe the mind of every ſublime writer to be; and ſuch in fact it muſt be, as long at leaſt as he employs himſelf in ſublime compoſition.

* Who that, from Alpine heights, his labouring eye
Shoots round the wide horizon, to ſurvey
The Nile or Ganges roll his waſteful tide
Through mountains, plains, through empires black with ſhade,
And continents of ſand, will turn his gaze
To mark the windings of a ſcanty rill,
That murmurs at his feet?

Pleaſures of Imagination, book 1.

"The meditations," ſays a very ingenious writer, (ſpeaking of the view from Mount Etna), "are ever "elevated in proportion to the grandeur and ſublimity "of the objects that ſurround us; and here, where "you have all nature to rouſe your imagination, what "man can remain inactive?" See the whole paſſage; which, from its ſublimity, one would be tempted to think had been compoſed on the ſpot;

Brydon's Travels, letter 10.

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Mean language, therefore, or ludicrous ſentiment, are unnatural in an Epic poem, for this reaſon, among others, that they do not naturally occur while one is compoſing it. And hence Milton's humorous deſcription of the *limbo of Vanity* *, however juſt as an allegory, however poignant as a ſatire, ought not to have obtained a place in Paradiſe Loſt. Such a thing might ſuit the volatile genius of Arioſto and his followers; but is quite unworthy of the ſober and well-principled diſciple of Homer and Virgil.

In Dramatic Poetry, the perſons act and ſpeak in their own character, and the author never appears at all. An elevated ſtyle may, however, be natural in tragedy, on account of the high rank of the perſons, and of the important affairs in which they are engaged. Even Comedy, who takes her characters from the middle and lower ranks of mankind, may occaſionally lift up her voice, as Horace ſays †, when ſhe means to give utterance to any important emotion, or happens to introduce a perſonage of more than ordinary dignity.——But what if perſons of low condition ſhould make their appearance in Tragedy? And as the great muſt have attendants, how can this be guarded againſt? And if ſuch perſons appear,

* Paradiſe Loſt, book 3. verſ. 444.

† Hor. Ar. Poet. verſ. 92.

will not their language be unnatural, if raiſed to a level with that of their ſuperiors? Or, would it not give a motley caſt to the poem, if it were to fall below that level? ——No doubt, an uniform colour of language, though not eſſential to Tragi-comedy, or to the Hiſtoric drama, is indiſpenſable in a regular tragedy. But perſons of mean rank, if the tragic poet find it neceſſary to bring them in, may eaſily be ſuppoſed to have had advantages of education to qualify them for bearing a part in the dialogue, or for any other office in which he may think proper to employ them.——Beſides, language admits of many degrees of elevation; and a particular turn of fancy, or temperature of the paſſions, will ſometimes give wonderful ſublimity to the ſtyle even of a peaſant or of a ſavage. So that the ſtyle of tragedy, notwithſtanding its elevation, may be as various as the characters and paſſions of men, and may yet in each variety be natural. ——Moreover, the ſubject, and conſequently the emotions, of tragedy, are always important; and important emotions prevailing in the mind of a peaſant will exalt and invigorate his language. When the old ſhepherd in *Douglas* exclaims, "Bleſt be the "day that made me a poor man; My po-"verty has ſaved my maſter's houſe;" the thought and the words, though ſufficiently tragical, have no greater elevation, than

we ſhould expect from any perſon of his character and circumſtances. Simplicity of ſtyle, for which none are diſqualified by the meanneſs of their condition, often enforces a ſublime or pathetic ſentiment with the happieſt effect.——Let it be obſerved further, that poetical language is an imitation of real language improved to a ſtate of perfection; and therefore, that the ſtyle of tragedy, though raiſed above that of common life, will never offend, ſo long as its elevations are at all conſiſtent with probability. In fact, when the paſſions are well expreſſed, and the characters well drawn, a tragic poet needs not fear, that he ſhall be found fault with for the elegance of his language: tho' no doubt a great maſter will always know how to proportion the degree of elegance to the character of the ſpeaker.

The dignity of a Tragic hero may be ſo great as to require an elevation of language equal to the pitch of Epic poetry itſelf. This might be exemplified from many of the ſpeeches of Lear, Othello, Hamlet, and Cato, and of Samſon in the Agoniſtes. But, in general, the Epic ſtyle is to be diſtinguiſhed from the Tragic, by a more uniform elevation, and more elaborate harmony: becauſe a poet, aſſuming the character of calm inſpiration, and rather relating the feelings of others, than expreſſing his own, would ſpeak with more compoſure, ſteadineſs, and art,

art, than could reaſonably be expected from thoſe who deliver their thoughts according to the immediate impulſe of paſſion.

The language of Comedy is that of common life improved in point of correctneſs; but not much elevated; — both becauſe the ſpeakers are of the middle and lower ranks of mankind, and alſo becauſe the affairs they are engaged in give little ſcope to thoſe emotions that exalt the mind, and rouſe the imagination. —— As to the ſtyle of farce, which is frequently blended with comedy; — it is purpoſely degraded below that of common life; or rather, it is the ridiculous language of common life made more ridiculous. I have already remarked, that Farce is to Poetry, what Caricatura is to Painting: as in the laſt we look for no beauty of attitude or feature, ſo neither in the firſt do we expect elegance of diction. Abſurdity of thought produces abſurdity of words and behaviour: the true farcical character is more extravagantly and more uniformly abſurd, than the droll of real life; and his language, in order to be natural, muſt be exaggerated accordingly. Yet as nothing is eſteemed in the fine arts, but what diſplays the ingenuity of the artiſt, I ſhould imagine, that, even in a farce, one would not receive much pleaſure from mere incongruity of words or actions; becauſe that may be ſo eaſily invented. Studied abſurdity cannot be

entertaining, unleſs it be in ſome degree uncommon *.

We may therefore repeat, and lay it down as a maxim, That "language is natural, "when it is ſuited to the ſpeaker's condition, "character, and circumſtances." And as, for the moſt part, the images and ſentiments of ſerious poetry are copied from the images and ſentiments, not of real, but of improved, nature †; ſo the language of ſerious poetry muſt (as hinted already) be a tranſcript, not of the real language of nature, which is often diſſonant and rude, but of natural language improved as far as may be conſiſtent with probability, and with the ſuppoſed character of the ſpeaker. If this be not the caſe, if the language of poetry be ſuch only as we hear in converſation, or read in hiſtory, it will, inſtead of delight, bring diſappointment: becauſe it will fall ſhort of what we expect from an art which is recommended rather by its pleaſurable qualities, than by its intrinſic utility; and to which, in order to render it pleaſing, we grant higher privileges, than to any other kind of literary compoſition, or any other mode of human language.

The next inquiry muſt therefore be, "How "is the language of nature to be improved?" or rather, "What are thoſe improvements

* Eſſay on Laughter, chap. 3.

† See above, part 1, chap. 3. 4. 5.

"that

" that peculiarly belong to the language of " poetry ?"

SECT. II.

Natural language is improved in poetry by the uſe of Poetical words.

ONE mode of improvement peculiar to poetical diction reſults from the uſe of thoſe words, and phraſes, which, becauſe they rarely occur in proſe, and frequently in verſe, are by the grammarian and lexicographer termed *Poetical.* In theſe ſome languages abound more than others: but no language I am acquainted with is altogether without them; and perhaps no language can be ſo, in which any number of good poems have been written. For poetry is better remembered than proſe, eſpecially by poetical authors; who will always be apt to imitate the phraſeology of thoſe they have been accuſtomed to read and admire: and thus, in the works of poets, down through ſucceſſive generations, certain phraſes may have been conveyed, which, though originally perhaps in common uſe, are now confined to poetical compoſition. Proſe-writers are not ſo apt to imitate one another, at leaſt in words and phraſes; both becauſe they do not

ſo

ſo well remember one another's phraſeology, and alſo becauſe their language is leſs artificial, and muſt not, if they would make it eaſy and flowing, (without which it cannot be elegant), depart eſſentially from the ſtyle of correct converſation. Poets too, on account of the greater difficulty of their numbers, have, both in the choice and in the arrangement of words, a better claim to indulgence, and ſtand more in need of a diſcretionary power.

The language of Homer differs materially from what was written and ſpoken in Greece in the days of Socrates. It differs in the mode of inflection, it differs in the ſyntax, it differs even in the words; ſo that one might read Homer with eaſe, who could not read Xenophon; or Xenophon, without being able to read Homer. Yet I cannot believe, that Homer, or the firſt Greek poet who wrote in his ſtyle, would make choice of a dialect quite different from what was intelligible in his own time; for poets have in all ages written with a view to be read, and to be read with pleaſure; which they could not be, if their diction were hard to be underſtood. It is more reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that the language of Homer is according to ſome ancient dialect, which, though not perhaps in familiar uſe among the Greeks at the time he wrote, was however intelligible. From the Homeric to the Socratic age, a period had elapſed of no leſs than four hundred

dred years; during which the ſtyle both of diſcourſe and of writing muſt have undergone great alterations. Yet the Iliad continued the ſtandard of heroic poetry, and was conſidered as the very perfection of poetical language; notwithſtanding that ſome words in it were become ſo antiquated, or ſo ambiguous, that Ariſtotle himſelf ſeems to have been ſomewhat doubtful in regard to their meaning *. And if Chaucer's merit as a poet had been as great as Homer's, and the Engliſh tongue under Edward the Third, as perfect as the Greek was in the ſecond century after the Trojan war, the ſtyle of Chaucer would probably have been our model for poetical diction at this day; even as Petrarcha, his contemporary, is ſtill imitated by the beſt poets of Italy.

I have ſomewhere read, that the rudeneſs of the ſtyle of Ennius was imputed by the old critics to his having copied too cloſely the dialect of common life. But this, I preſume, muſt be a miſtake. For, if we compare the fragments of that author with the comedies of Plautus, who flouriſhed in the ſame age, and whoſe language was certainly copied from that of common life, we ſhall be ſtruck with an air of antiquity in the former, that is not in the latter. Ennius, no doubt, like moſt other ſublime poets, affected ſomething of the antique in his expreſſion: and many

* Ariſtot. Poet. cap. 25.

of

of his words and phraſes, not adopted by any proſe-writer now extant, are to be found in Lucretius and Virgil, and were by them tranſmitted to ſucceeding poets. Theſe form part of the Roman poetical dialect; which appears from the writings of Virgil, where we have it in perfection, to have been very copious. The ſtyle of this charming poet is indeed ſo different from proſe, and is altogether ſo peculiar, that it is perhaps impoſſible to analyſe it on the common principles of Latin grammar. And yet no author can be more perſpicuous or more expreſſive; notwithſtanding the frequency of Greciſm in his ſyntax, and his love of old words, which he, in the judgement of Quintilian, knew better than any other man how to improve into decoration *.

The poetical dialect of modern Italy is ſo different from the proſaic, that I have known perſons who read the hiſtorians, and even ſpoke with tolerable fluency the language of that country, but could not eaſily conſtrue a page of Petrarcha or Taſſo. Yet it is not probable, that Petrarcha, whoſe works are a ſtandard of the Italian poetical diction †, made any material innovations in his native tongue. I rather believe, that he wrote it nearly as it was ſpoken in his time, that is,

* Quintil. Inſtit. viii. 3. § 3.

† Vicende della literatura del Denina, cap. 4.

in the fourteenth century; omitting only harſh combinations, and taking that liberty which Homer probably, and Virgil certainly, took before him, of reviving ſuch old, but not obſolete expreſſions, as ſeemed peculiarly ſignificant and melodious; and poliſhing his ſtyle to that degree of elegance which human ſpeech, without becoming unnatural, may admit of, and which the genius of poetry, as an art ſubſervient to pleaſure, may be thought to require.

The French poetry in general is diſtinguiſhed from proſe rather by the rhime and the meaſure, than by any old or uncommon phraſeology. Yet the French, on certain ſubjects, imitate the ſtyle of their old poets, of Marot in particular; and may therefore be ſaid to have ſomething of a poetical dialect, tho' far leſs extenſive than the Italian, or even than the Engliſh. And it may, I think, be preſumed, that in future ages they will have more of this dialect than they have at preſent. This I would infer from the very uncommon merit of ſome of their late poets, particularly Boileau and La Fontaine, who, in their reſpective departments, will continue to be imitated, when the preſent modes of French proſe are greatly changed: an event that, for all the pains they take to preſerve their language, muſt inevitably happen, and whereof there are not wanting ſome preſages already.

The Engliſh poetical dialect is not cha-

racteriſed by any peculiarities of inflection, nor by any great latitude in the uſe of foreign idioms. More copious it is, however, than one would at firſt imagine. I know of no author who has conſidered it in the way of detail *. —— What follows is but a very ſhort ſpecimen.

1. A few Greek and Latin idioms are

* Since writing the above, I have had the pleaſure to read the following judicious remarks on this ſubject. "The language of the age is never the language of "poetry, except among the French, whoſe verſe, where "the ſentiment or image does not ſupport it, differs in "nothing from proſe. Our poetry, on the contrary, "has a language peculiar to itſelf; to which almoſt every "one that has written has added ſomething, by enrich-"ing it with foreign idioms and derivatives; nay, ſome-"times words of their own compoſition or invention. "Shakeſpeare and Milton have been great creators this "way; and no one more licencious than Pope or Dry-"den, who perpetually borrow expreſſions from the "former. Let me give you ſome inſtances from Dryden, "whom every body reckons a great maſter of our poe-"tical tongue. Full of *muſeful mopings* — unlike the "*trim* of love — a pleaſant *beverage* — a *roundelay* of "love — ſtood ſilent in his *mood* — with knots and "*knares* deformed — his *ireful mood* — in proud *array* "— his *boon* was granted — and *diſarray* and ſhameful "rout — *wayward* but wife — *furbiſhed* for the field — "*dodder'd* oaks — *diſherited* — *ſmouldering* flames — *retch-"leſs* of laws — *crones* old and ugly — the *beldam* at his "ſide — the *grandam* — *hag* — *villanize* his father's fame. "—— But they are infinite: and our language not be-"ing a ſettled thing, (like the French), has an un-"doubted right to words of an hundred years old, pro-"vided antiquity have not rendered them unintelligible."

Mr Gray's Letters, ſect. 3. *letter* 4.

common

common in Engliſh poetry, which are ſeldom or never to be met with in proſe. QUENCHED OF HOPE. Shakeſpeare. —— SHORN OF HIS BEAMS. Milton. —— *Created thing* NOR VALUED HE NOR SHUN'D. Milton. —— *'Tis thus we riot, while* WHO SOW IT STARVE. Pope. —— *This day* BE BREAD AND PEACE MY LOT. Pope. —— INTO WHAT PIT THOU SEE'ST FROM WHAT HEIGHT FALLEN. Milton. —— *He deceived The mother of mankind,* WHAT TIME HIS PRIDE HAD CAST HIM *out of heaven.* Milton. —— Some of theſe, with others to be found in Milton, ſeem to have been adopted for the ſake of brevity, which in the poetical tongue is indiſpenſable. For the ſame reaſon, perhaps, the articles *a* and *the* are ſometimes omitted by our poets, though leſs frequently in ſerious than burleſque compoſition *. —— In Engliſh, the adjective generally goes before the ſubſtantive, the no-

* In the Greek poetry, the omiſſion of the article is more frequent than the uſe of it. The very learned and ingenious author of A Treatiſe *On the origin and progreſs of Language,* ſuppoſes, that in the time of Homer, who eſtabliſhed their poetical language, the article was little uſed by the Greeks: and this ſuppoſition appears highly probable, when we conſider, that in the Latin, which was derived from the Pelaſgic tongue, (a very ancient dialect of Greek), there is no article. Yet, though the article had been in uſe in Homer's age, I imagine, that he, and every other Greek poet who wrote hexameters, would have often found it *neceſſary* to leave it out.

minative before the verb, and the active verb before (what we call) the accuſative. Exceptions, however, to this rule, are not uncommon even in proſe. But in poetry they are more frequent. *Their homely joys, and* DESTINY OBSCURE. *Now fades the glimmering landſcape on the ſight; and all the air a ſolemn ſtillneſs holds.* In general, that verſification may be leſs difficult, and the cadence more uniformly pleaſing; and ſometimes, too, in order to give energy to expreſſion, or vivacity to an image, — the Engliſh poet is permitted to take much greater liberties, than the proſe-writer, in arranging his words, and modulating his lines and periods. Examples may be ſeen in every page of Paradiſe Loſt.

2. Some of our poetical words take an additional ſyllable, that they may ſuit the verſe the better; as, *diſpart*, *diſtain*, *diſport*, *affright*, *enchain*, for part, ſtain, ſport, fright, chain. Others ſeem to be nothing elſe than common words made ſhorter, for the convenience of the verſifier. Such are *auxiliar*, *ſublunar*, *trump*, *vale*, *part*, *clime*, *ſubmiſs*, *frolic*, *plain*, *drear*, *dread*, *helm*, *morn*, *mead*, *eve* and *even*, *gan*, *illume* and *illumine*, *ope*, *hoar*, *bide*, *ſwage*, *ſcape*; for auxiliary, ſublunary, trumpet, valley, depart, climate, ſubmiſſive, frolicſome, complain, dreary, dreadful, helmet, morning, meadow, evening, began or began to, illuminate, open, hoary, abide, aſſuage, eſcape. —— Of ſome of theſe the ſhort

ſhort form is the more ancient. In Scotland, *even*, *morn*, *bide*, *ſwage*, are ſtill in vulgar uſe; but *morn*, except when contradiſtinguiſhed to *even*, is ſynonymous, not with *morning*, (as in the Engliſh poetical dialect), but with *morrow*.—— The Latin poets, in a way ſomewhat ſimilar, and perhaps for a ſimilar reaſon, ſhortened *fundamentum*, *tutamentum*, *munimentum*, &c. into fundamen, tutamen, munimen *.

3. Of the following words, which are now almoſt peculiar to poetry, the greater part are ancient, and were once no doubt in common uſe in England, as many of them ſtill are in Scotland. *Aſield*, *amain*, *annoy* (a noun), *anon*, *aye* (ever), *beheſt*, *blithe*, *brand* (ſword), *bridal*, *carol*, *dame* (lady), *featly*, *fell* (an adjective), *gaude*, *gore*, *hoſt* (army), *lambkin*, *late* (of late), *lay* (poem), *lea*, *glade*, *gleam*, *hurl*, *lore*, *meed*, *oriſons*, *plod* (to travel laborioufly), *ringlet*, *rue* (a verb), *ruth*, *ruthleſs*, *ſojourn* (a noun), *ſmite*, *ſpeed* (an active verb), *ſave* (except), *ſpray* (twig), *ſteed*, *ſtrain* (ſong), *ſtrand*, *ſwain*, *thrall*, *thrill*, *trail* (a verb), *troll*, *wail*, *welter*, *warble*, *wayward*, *woe*, *the while* (in the mean time), *yon*, *of yore*.

* —— Quod poetæ alligati ad certam pedum neceſſitatem, non ſemper propriis uti poſſint, ſed depulſi a recta via neceſſario ad eloquendi quædam diverticula confugiant; nec mutare quædam modo verba, ſed *extendere*, *corripere*, convertere, dividere, cogantur.

Quintilian.

4. Theſe

4. Theſe that follow are alſo poetical; but, ſo far as I know, were never in common uſe. *Appal*, *arrowy*, *attune*, *battailous*, *breezy*, *car* (chariot), *clarion*, *cates*, *courſer*, *darkling*, *flicker*, *floweret*, *emblaze*, *gairiſh*, *circlet*, *impearl*, *nightly*, *noiſeleſs*, *pinion* (wing), *ſhadowy*, *ſlumberous*, *ſtreamy*, *troublous*, *wilder* (a verb), *ſhrill* (a verb), *ſhook* (ſhaken), *madding*, *viewleſs*.—I ſuſpect too, that the following, derived from the Greek and Latin, are peculiar to poetry. *Clang*, *clangor*, *choral*, *bland*, *boreal*, *dire*, *enſanguined*, *ire*, *ireful*, *lave* (to waſh), *nymph* (lady, girl), *orient*, *panoply*, *philomel*, *infuriate*, *jocund*, *radiant*, *rapt*, *redolent*, *refulgent*, *verdant*, *vernal*, *zypher*, *zone* (girdle), *ſylvan*, *ſuffuſe*.

5. In moſt languages, the rapidity of pronunciation abbreviates ſome of the commoneſt words, or even joins two, or perhaps more, of them, into one; and ſome of theſe abbreviated forms find admiſſion into writing. The Engliſh language was quite diſfigured by them in the end of the laſt century; but Swift, by his ſatire and example, brought them into diſrepute: and, though ſome of them be retained in converſation, as *don't*, *ſhan't*, *can't*, they are now avoided in ſolemn ſtyle; and by elegant writers in general, except where the colloquial dialect is imitated, as in comedy. *'Tis* and *'twas*, ſince the time of Shafteſbury, ſeem to have been daily loſing credit, at leaſt in proſe; but ſtill have a place in poetry; perhaps becauſe

cauſe they contribute to conciſeneſs. *'Twas on a lofty vaſe's ſide.* Gray. *'Tis true, 'tis certain, man though dead retains part of himſelf.* Pope. In verſe too, *over* may be ſhortened into *o'er*, (which is the Scotch, and probably was the old Engliſh, pronunciation), *ever* into *e'er*, and *never* into *ne'er*; and from *the* and *to*, when they go before a word beginning with a vowel, the final letter is ſometimes cut off. *O'er hills, o'er dales, o'er crags, o'er rocks they go.* Pope. *Where-e'er ſhe turns, the Graces homage pay. And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave. Rich with the ſpoils of time did ne'er unroll.* Gray. *T'alarm th' eternal midnight of the grave.* —— Theſe abbreviations are now peculiar to the poetical tongue, but not neceſſary to it. They ſometimes promote brevity, and render verſification leſs difficult.

6. Thoſe words which are commonly called *compound epithets*, as *roſy-finger'd, roſy-boſom'd, many-twinkling, many-ſounding, moſs-grown, bright-eyed, ſtraw-built, ſpirit-ſtirring, incenſe-breathing, heaven-taught, love-whiſpering, lute-reſounding*, are alſo to be conſidered as part of our poetical dialect. It is true we have compounded adjectives in familiar uſe, as *high-ſeaſoned, well-natured, ill-bred*, and innumerable others. But I ſpeak of thoſe that are leſs common, that ſeldom occur except in poetry, and of which in proſe the uſe would appear affected. And that they ſometimes promote brevity and vivacity of expreſſion,

expreſſion, cannot be denied. But, as they give, when too frequent, a ſtiff and finical air to a performance; as they are not always explicit in the ſenſe, nor agreeable in the ſound; as they are apt to produce a confuſion, or too great a multiplicity of images; as they tend to disfigure the language, and furniſh a pretext for endleſs innovation; I would have them uſed ſparingly; and thoſe only uſed, which the practice of popular authors has rendered familiar to the ear, and which are in themſelves peculiarly emphatical and harmonious. For I cannot think, with Dacier and Sanadon, that this well-known verſe in Horace's Art of Poetry,

> Dixeris egregie, notum ſi callida verbum
> Reddiderit junctura novum———

gives any warrant, even to a Latin poet, for the formation of theſe compound words; which, if I miſtake not, were more faſhionable in the days of Ennius, than of Horace and Virgil *.

7. In

* The critics are divided about the meaning of this paſſage. Horace is ſpeaking of *new words*; which he allows to be ſometimes neceſſary; but which, he ſays, ought to be *ſparingly* and *cautiouſly* introduced; In verbis etiam *tenuis cautuſque* ſerendis; and then ſubjoins the words quoted in the text, Dixeris egregie, &c.

1. Some think, that this *callida junctura* refers to the formation of *compound epithets*, as velivolus, ſaxifragus,

7. In the transformation of nouns into verbs and participles, our poetical dialect admits

ſolivagus, &c.; and that the import of the precept is this: "Rather than by bringing in a word altogether new, "even when a new word is neceſſary, you ſhould ex- "preſs yourſelf by two known words artfully joined to- "gether into one, ſo as to aſſume a new appearance, "and to admit a new though analogical ſignification." This might no doubt be done with propriety in ſome caſes. But I cannot think, that Horace is here ſpeaking of compound words. — For, firſt, this ſort of words were much more ſuitable to the genius of the Greek than of the Latin tongue; as Quintilian ſomewhere inſinuates, and every body knows who is at all acquainted with theſe languages. — Secondly, we find in fact, that theſe words are leſs frequent in Horace and Virgil, than in the older poets; whence we may infer, that they became leſs faſhionable as the Latin tongue advanced nearer to perfection. — Thirdly, Virgil is known to have introduced three or four new words from the Greek, *Lychni*, *Spelæa*, *Thyas*, &c.; but it does not appear, that either Virgil or Horace ever fabricated one of theſe compound words; and it is not probable, that Horace would recommend a practice, which neither himſelf nor Virgil had ever warranted by his example. — Fourthly, our author, in his illuſtrations upon the precept in queſtion, affirms, that new words will more eaſily obtain currency if taken from the Greek tongue; and Virgil, if we may judge of his opinions by his practice, appears to have been of the ſame mind. And there was good reaſon for it. The Greek and Latin are kindred languages; and as the former was much ſtudied at Rome, there was no riſk of introducing any obſcurity into the Roman language by the introduction of a Greek word. — Laſtly, it may be doubted, whether *junctura*, though it often denotes the compoſition of words in a ſentence or clauſe (Quintil. ix. 4.), and ſometimes arrangement or compoſition in general (Hor. Ar. Poet. verſe 242.) — is ever uſed

mits of greater latitude than proſe. Hymn, pillow, curtain, ſtory, pillar, picture, peal, ſurge,

to expreſs the union of ſyllables in a word, or of ſimple words in a compound epithet.

2. Other interpreters ſuppoſe, that this *callida junctura* refers to the arrangement of words in the ſentence, and that the precept amounts to this: "When a new "expreſſion is neceſſary, you will acquit yourſelf well, "if by means of an artful arrangement you can to a "known word give a new ſignification." But one would think, that the obſervance of this precept muſt tend to the utter confuſion of language. To give new ſignifications to words in preſent uſe, muſt increaſe the ambiguity of language; which in every tongue is greater than it ought to be, and which would ſeem to be more detrimental to eloquence and even to literature, than the introduction of many new words of definite meaning. Thoſe who favour this interpretation give *comæ ſylvarum* for *folia*, as a phraſe to exemplify the precept. But the foliage of a tree is not a new idea, nor could there be any need of a new word or new phraſe to expreſs it: though a poet, no doubt, on account of his verſe, or on ſome other account, might chuſe to expreſs it by *a figure*, rather than by its *proper* name. *Comæ ſylvarum* for *folia*, is neither leſs nor more than a metaphor, or, if you pleaſe, a catachreſis; but Horace, is ſpeaking, not of figurative language, but of new words. — Both theſe interpretations ſuppoſe, that the words of our poet are to be conſtrued according to this order: Dixeris egregie, ſi callida junctura reddiderit *notum verbum novum*.

3. The beſt of all our poet's interpreters, the learned Dr Hurd, conſtrues the paſſage in the ſame manner, and explains it thus: "Inſtead of framing new words, "I recommend to you any kind of artful management, "by which you may be able to give a new air and caſt "to old ones." And this explication he illuſtrates moſt ingeniouſly by a variety of examples, that throw great light on the ſubject of poetical diction. See his notes on the *Ars Poetica*.

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ſurge, cavern, honey, career, cincture, boſom, ſphere, are common nouns; but, *to hymn*, *to pillow*, *curtained*, *pillared*, *pictured*, *pealing*, *ſurging*, *cavern'd*, *honied*, *careering*, *cinctured*, *boſomed*, *ſphered*, would appear affected in proſe, though in verſe they are warranted by the very beſt authority.

Some late poets, particularly the imitators of Spenſer, have introduced a great variety of uncommon words, as certes, eftſoons, ne, whilom, tranſmew, moil, fone, loſel, albe, hight, dight, pight, thews, couthful, aſſot,

I ſhould ill conſult my own credit, if I were to oppoſe my judgement to that of this able critic and excellent author. Yet I would beg leave to ſay, that to me the poet ſeems, through this whole paſſage, from verſ. 46. to verſ. 72. to be ſpeaking of the *formation of new words*; a practice whereof he allows the danger, but proves the neceſſity. And I find I cannot diveſt myſelf of an old prejudice in favour of another interpretation, which is more obvious and ſimple, and which I conſidered as the beſt, long before I knew it was authoriſed by that judicious annotator Joannes Bond, and by Dryden in his notes upon the Eneid, as well as by the Abbe Batteux in his commentary on Horace's *art of poetry*. "New "words (ſays the poet) are to be cautiouſly and ſparingly "introduced; but, when neceſſary, an author will do "well to give them ſuch a poſition in the ſentence, as "that the reader ſhall be at no loſs to diſcover their "meaning." For I would conſtrue the paſſage thus, Dixeris egregie, ſi callida junctura reddiderit *novum verbum notum*. But why, it may be ſaid, did not Horace, if this was really his meaning, put *novum* in the firſt line, and *notum* in the ſecond? The anſwer is eaſy. His verſe would not admit that order: for the firſt ſyllable of *novum* is ſhort, and the firſt ſyllable of *notum* long.

muchel, wend arrear, &c. Theſe were once poetical words, no doubt; but they are now obſolete, and to many readers unintelligible. No man of the preſent age, however converſant in this dialect, would naturally expreſs himſelf in it on any intereſting emergence; or, ſuppoſing this natural to the antiquarian, it would never appear ſo to the common hearer or reader. A mixture of theſe words, therefore, muſt ruin the pathos of modern language; and as they are not familiar to our ear, and plainly appear to be ſought after and affected, will generally give a ſtiffneſs to modern verſification. Yet in ſubjects approaching to the ludicrous they may have a good effect; as in the *Schoolmiſtreſs* of Shenſtone, Parnel's Fairy-tale, Thomſon's Caſtle of Indolence, and Pope's lines in the Dunciad upon Wormius. But this effect will be moſt pleaſing to thoſe who have leaſt occaſion to recur to the gloſſary.

But why, it may be aſked, ſhould theſe old words be more pathetic and pleaſing in Spenſer, than in his imitators? I anſwer, Becauſe in him they ſeem, or we believe them to be, natural; in them we are ſure that they are affected. In him there is an eaſe and uniformity of expreſſion, that ſhows he wrote a language not materially different from what was written by all the ſerious poets of his time; whereas the mixed dialect of theſe imitators is plainly artificial, and ſuch as would make any man ridiculous, if he were now

now to adopt it in converſation. A long beard may give dignity to the portrait, or ſtatue of a hero, whom we know to have been two hundred years in his grave: but the chin of a modern European commander briſtling with that antique appendage, would appear awkward and ridiculous. — But did not Spenſer himſelf make uſe of words that are known to have been obſolete, or merely provincial, in his time? Yes; and thoſe words in Spenſer have the ſame bad effect, that words now obſolete have in his imitators; they are to moſt readers unintelligible, and to thoſe who underſtand them appear ludicrous or affected. Some of his Eclogues, and even ſome paſſages in the Fairy Queen, are liable to this cenſure. — But what if Spenſer had fixed the poetical language of England, as Homer did that of Greece? Would any of his old words in that caſe have appeared awkward in a modern poem? Perhaps they would not: but let it be obſerved, that, in that caſe, they would have been adopted by Milton, and Dryden, and Pope, and by all our ſerious poets ſince the age of Eliſabeth; and would therefore have been perfectly intelligible to every reader of Engliſh verſe; and, from our having been ſo long accuſtomed to meet with them in the moſt elegant compoſitions, would have acquired a dignity equal, or perhaps ſuperior, to that which now belongs

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to the poetical language of Pope and Milton.

I grant, it is not always eaſy to fix the boundary between poetical and obſolete expreſſions. To many readers, *lore*, *meed*, *beheſt*, *blithe*, *gaude*, *ſpray*, *thrall*, may already appear antiquated; and to ſome the ſtyle of Spenſer, or even of Chaucer, may be as inteiligible as that of Dryden. This however we may venture to affirm, that a word, which the majority of readers cannot underſtand without a gloſſary, may with reaſon be conſidered as obſolete; and ought not to be uſed in modern compoſition, unleſs revived, and recommended to the public ear, by ſome very eminent writer. There are but few words in Milton, as *nathleſs*, *tine*, *frore*, *boſky*, &c.; there are but one or two in Dryden, as *falſify* *; and in Pope, there are none at all, which every reader of our poetry may not be ſuppoſed to underſtand: whereas in Shakeſpeare there are many, and in Spenſer many more, for which one who knows Engliſh very well may be obliged to conſult the dictionary. The practice of Milton, Dryden, or Pope, may therefore, in almoſt all caſes, be admitted as good authori-

* Dryden in one place (Eneid ix. verſ. 1095) uſes *Falſified* to denote *Pierced through and through*. He acknowledges, that this uſe of the word is an innovation; and has nothing to plead for it but his own authority, and that *Falſare* in Italian ſometimes means the ſame thing.

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ty for the uſe of a poetical word. And in them, all the words above enumerated, as poetical, and in preſent uſe, may actually be found. And of ſuch poets as may chuſe to obſerve this rule, it will not be ſaid, either that they reject the judgement of Quintilian, who recommends the neweſt of the old words, and the oldeſt of the new, or that they are unattentive to Pope's precept,

> Be not the firſt by whom the new are tried,
> Nor yet the laſt to lay the old aſide *.

We muſt not ſuppoſe, that theſe poetical words never occur at all, except in poetry. Even from converſation they are not excluded; and the ancient critics allow, that they may be admitted into proſe; where they occaſionally confer dignity upon a ſublime ſubject, or, for reaſons elſewhere hinted at †, heighten the ludicrous qualities of a mean one. But it is in poetry only, where the frequent uſe of them does not ſavour of affectation.

Nor muſt we ſuppoſe them eſſential to this art. Many paſſages there are of exquiſite poetry, wherein not a ſingle phraſe occurs, that might not be uſed in proſe. In fact the influence of theſe words in adorning Engliſh verſe is not very extenſive. Some in-

* Eſſay on Criticiſm, verſ. 335.

† Eſſay on Laughter, chap. 2. ſect. 4.

fluence

fluence however they have. They ſerve to render the poetical ſtyle, firſt, more melodious; and, ſecondly, more ſolemn.

Firſt, They render the poetical ſtyle more melodious, and more eaſily reducible into meaſure. Words of unwieldy ſize, or difficult pronunciation, are never uſed by correct poets, where they can be avoided; unleſs in their ſound they have ſomething imitative of the ſenſe. Homer's poetical inflections contribute wonderfully to the ſweetneſs of his numbers: and if the reader is pleaſed to look back to the ſpecimen I gave of the Engliſh poetical dialect, he will find that the words are in general well-ſounding, and ſuch as may coaleſce with other words, without producing harſh combinations. Quintilian obſerves, that poets, for the ſake of their verſe, are indulged in many liberties, not granted to the orator, of lengthening, ſhortening, and dividing their words *: — and if the Greek and Roman poets claimed this indulgence from neceſſity, and obtained it, the Engliſh, thoſe of them eſpecially who write in rhime, may claim it with better reaſon; as the words of their language are leſs muſical, and far leſs ſuſceptible of variety in arrangement and ſyntax.

Secondly, Such poetical words as are known to be ancient have ſomething venerable in their appearance, and impart a ſo-

* Inſtit. Orat. lib. 10. cap. 1. § 3.

lemnity to all around them. This remark is from Quintilian; who adds, that they give to a compoſition that caſt and colour of antiquity, which in painting is ſo highly valued, but which art can never effectually imitate *. Poetical words that are either not ancient, or not known to be ſuch, have however a pleaſing effect from aſſociation. We are accuſtomed to meet with them in ſublime and elegant writing; and hence they come to acquire ſublimity and elegance:—even as the words we hear on familiar occaſions come to be accounted familiar; and as thoſe that take their riſe among pick-pockets, gamblers, and gypſies, are thought too indelicate to be uſed by any perſon of taſte or good manners. When one hears the following lines, which abound in poetical words,

> The breezy call of incenſe-breathing morn,
> The ſwallow twittering from the ſtraw-built ſhed,
> The cock's ſhrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
> No more ſhall rouſe them from their lowly bed:

—one is as ſenſible of the dignity of the language; as one would be of the vileneſs or vulgarity of that man's ſpeech, who ſhould prove his acquaintance with Bridewell, by interlarding his diſcourſe with ſuch

* Lib. 8. cap. 3. § 3.

terms as *mill-doll*, *queer cull*, or *nubbing cheat* *; or who, in imitation of fops and gamblers, ſhould, on the common occaſions of life, talk of being *beat hollow*, or *ſaving his diſtance* †. — What gives dignity to perſons gives dignity to language. A man of this character is one who has borne important employments, been connected with honourable aſſociates, and never degraded himſelf by levity, or immorality of conduct. Dignified phraſes are thoſe which have been uſed to expreſs elevated ſentiments, have always made their appearance in elegant compoſition, and have never been profaned by giving permanency or utterance to the paſſions of the vile, the giddy, or the worthleſs. And as by an active old age, the dignity of ſuch men is confirmed and heightened; ſo the dignity of ſuch words, if they be not ſuffered to fall into diſuſe, ſeldom fails to improve by length of time.

* See the Scoundrel's Dictionary.

† Language of Newmarket.

SECT

SECT. III.

Natural Language is improved in poetry, by means of Tropes and Figures.

SO much for the nature and uſe of thoſe words that are *poetical*, and yet not figurative. But from *Figurative Expreſſion* there ariſes a more copious and important ſource of Poetic Eloquence. Some ſorts of poetry are diſtinguiſhed by the beauty, boldneſs, and frequency of the Figures, as well as by the meaſure, or by any of the contrivances above mentioned. And in proſe we often meet with ſuch figures and words, as we expect only in poetry; in which caſe the language is called *Poetical:* and in verſe we ſometimes find a diction ſo tame, and ſo void of ornament, that we brand it with the appellation of *Proſaic*.

As my deſign in this diſcourſe is, not to deliver a ſyſtem of rhetoric, but to explain the peculiar effects of poetry upon the mind, by tracing out the characters that diſtinguiſh this from other literary arts; it would be improper to enter here, with any degree of minuteneſs, into the philoſophy of Tropes and Figures: theſe being ornamental, not to poetry only, but to human ſpeech in general.

All that the preſent occaſion requires will be performed, when it is ſhown, in what reſpects tropical and figurative language is more neceſſary to poetry than to any other ſort of compoſition.

If it appear, that, by means of Figures, Language may be made more *pleaſing*, and more *natural*, than it would be without them; it will follow, that to Poetic Language, whoſe end is to *pleaſe* by imitating *nature*, Figures muſt be not only ornamental, but neceſſary. I ſhall therefore, firſt, make a few remarks on the importance and utility of figurative language; ſecondly, ſhow, that Figures are more neceſſary to poetry in general, than to any other mode of writing; and, thirdly, aſſign a reaſon why they are more neceſſary in ſome kinds of poetry than in others.

I. I purpoſe to make a few remarks on the importance and utility of Figurative Expreſſion, in making language more pleaſing and more natural.

1. The firſt remark is, that Tropes and Figures are often neceſſary to ſupply the unavoidable defects of language. When *proper* words are wanting, or not recollected, or when we do not chuſe to be always repeating them, we muſt have recourſe to tropes and figures.—When philoſophers began to explain the operations of the mind, they found, that moſt of the words in common uſe, being framed to anſwer the more obvious exigencies of life, were in their proper

per ſignification applicable to matter only and its qualities. What was to be done in this caſe? Would they think of making a new language to expreſs the qualities of mind? No: that would have been difficult, or impracticable; and granting it both practicable and eaſy, they muſt have foreſeen, that nobody would read or liſten to what was thus ſpoken or written in a new, and, conſequently, in an unknown, tongue. They therefore took the language as they found it; and, where-ever they thought there was a ſimilarity or analogy between the qualities of mind and the qualities of matter, ſcrupled not to uſe the names of the material qualities tropically, by applying them to the mental qualities. Hence came the phraſes, *ſolidity* of judgement, *warmth* of imagination, *enlargement* of underſtanding, and many others; which, though figurative, expreſs the meaning juſt as well as *proper* words would have done. In fact, numerous as the words in every language are, they muſt always fall ſhort of the unbounded variety of human thoughts and perceptions. Taſtes and ſmells are almoſt as numerous as the ſpecies of bodies. Sounds admit of perceptible varieties that ſurpaſs all computation, and the ſeven primary colours may be diverſified without end. If each variety of external perception were to have a name, language would be inſurmountably difficult; nay, if men were to appropriate a claſs of names to each particular

ticular ſenſe, they would multiply words exceedingly, without adding any thing to the clearneſs of ſpeech. Thoſe words, therefore, that in their proper ſignification denote the objects of one ſenſe, they often apply tropically to the objects of another; and ſay, ſweet taſte, ſweet ſmell, ſweet ſound; ſharp point, ſharp taſte, ſharp ſound; harmony of ſounds, harmony of colours, harmony of parts; ſoft ſilk, ſoft colour, ſoft ſound, ſoft temper; and ſo in a thouſand inſtances; and yet theſe words, in their tropical ſignification, are not leſs intelligible than in their proper one; for ſharp taſte and ſharp ſound, are as expreſſive as ſharp ſword; and harmony of tones is not better underſtood by the muſician, than harmony of parts by the architect, and harmony of colours by the painter.

Savages, illiterate perſons, and children, have comparatively but few words in proportion to the things they may have occaſion to ſpeak of; and muſt therefore recur to tropes and figures more frequently, than perſons of copious elocution. A ſeaman, or mechanic, even when he talks of that which does not belong to his art, borrows his language from that which does; and this makes his diction figurative to a degree that is ſometimes entertaining enough. "Death (ſays a "ſeaman in one of Smollet's novels) has "not yet *boarded* my comrade; but they "have been *yard arm and yard arm* theſe "*three*

" *three glaſſes.* His *ſtarboard* eye is open, " but faſt *jamm'd* in his head; and the " *haulyards* of his under jaw have given " way." Theſe phraſes are exaggerated; but we allow them to be natural, becauſe we know that illiterate people are apt to make uſe of tropes and figures taken from their own trade, even when they ſpeak of things that are very remote and incongruous. In thoſe poems, therefore, that imitate the converſation of illiterate perſons, as in comedy, farce, and paſtoral, ſuch figures judiciouſly applied may render the imitation more pleaſing, becauſe more exact and natural.

Words that are untuneable and harſh the poet is often obliged to avoid, when perhaps he has no other way to expreſs their meaning than by tropes and figures; and ſometimes the meaſure of his verſe may oblige him to reject a proper word that is not harſh, merely on account of its being too long, or too ſhort, or in any other way unſuitable to the rhythm, or to the rhime. And hence another uſe of figurative language, that it contributes to poetical harmony. Thus, *to preſs the plain* is frequently uſed to ſignify *to be ſlain in battle; liquid plain* is put for *ocean, blue ſerene* for *ſky*, and *ſylvan reign* for *country life.*

2. Tropes and Figures are favourable to delicacy. When the proper name of a thing is in any reſpect unpleaſant, a well-choſen trope will convey the idea in ſuch a way as

to

to give no offence. This is agreeable, and even neceſſary, in polite converſation, and cannot be diſpenſed with in elegant writing of any kind. Many words, from their being often applied to vulgar uſe, acquire a meanneſs that diſqualifies them for a place in ſerious poetry; while perhaps, under the influence of a different ſyſtem of manners, the correſponding words in another language may be elegant, or at leaſt not vulgar. When one reads Homer in the Greek, one takes no offence at his calling Eumeus by a name which, literally rendered, ſignifies *Swine-herd*; firſt, becauſe the Greek word is well-ſounding in itſelf; ſecondly, becauſe we have never heard it pronounced in converſation, nor conſequently debaſed by vulgar uſe; and, thirdly, becauſe we know, that the office denoted by it was, in the age of Eumeus, both important and honourable. But Pope would have been blamed, if a name ſo indelicate as *ſwine-herd* had in his tranſlation been applied to ſo eminent a perſonage; and therefore he judiciouſly makes uſe of the trope *ſynecdoche*, and calls him *Swain**; a word both elegant and poetical, and not likely to lead the reader into any miſtake about the perſon ſpoken of, as his employment had been deſcribed in a preceding paſſage. The ſame Eumeus is ſaid, in the ſimple, but melodious language of the ori-

* Pope's Homer's Odyſſey, book 14. verſ. 41.

ginal, to have been making his own ſhoes when Ulyſſes came to his door; a work which in thoſe days the greateſt heroes would often find neceſſary. This too the tranſlator ſoftens by a tropical expreſſion:

Here ſat Eumeus, and his cares applied
To form ſtrong *buſkins* of well-ſeaſon'd hide.

A hundred other examples might be quoted from this tranſlation; but theſe will explain my meaning.

There are other occaſions, on which the delicacy of figurative language is ſtill more needful: as in Virgil's account of the effects of animal love, and of the plague among the beaſts, in the third Georgic; where Dryden's ſtyle, by being leſs figurative than the original, is in one place exceedingly filthy, and in another ſhockingly obſcene.

Hobbes could conſtrue a Greek author; but his ſkill in words muſt have been all derived from the dictionary: for he ſeems not to have known, that any one articulate ſound could be more agreeable, or any one phraſe more dignified, than any other. In his Iliad and Odyſſey, even when he hits the author's ſenſe, (which is not always the caſe), he proves, by his choice of words, that of harmony, elegance, or energy of ſtyle, he had no manner of conception. And hence that work, tho' called a Tranſlation of Homer, does not even deſerve the name of

poem; becauſe it is in every reſpect *unpleaſing*, being nothing more than a fictitious narrative delivered in mean proſe, with the additional meanneſs of harſh rhyme, and untuneable meaſure.——Trapp underſtood Virgil well enough as a grammarian, and had a taſte for his beauties; yet his Tranſlation bears no reſemblance to Virgil; which is owing to the ſame cauſe, an imprudent choice of words and figures, and a total want of harmony.

I grant, that the delicacy we here contend for may, both in converſation and in writing, be carried too far. To call *killing an innocent man in a duel* an affair of honour, and *a violation of the rights of wedlock* an affair of gallantry, is a proſtitution of figurative language. Nor do I think it any credit to us, that we are ſaid to have upwards of forty figurative phraſes to denote exceſſive drinking. Language of this ſort generally implies, that the public abhorrence of ſuch crimes is not ſo ſtrong as it ought to be: and I am not certain, whether even our morals might not be improved, if we were to call theſe and ſuch like crimes by their proper names, murder, adultery, drunkenneſs, gluttony; names, that not only expreſs our meaning, but alſo betoken our diſapprobation.——As to writing, it cannot be denied, that even Pope himſelf, in the excellent verſion juſt now quoted, has ſometimes, for the ſake of his numbers, or for fear

fear of giving offence by too close an imitation of Homer's simplicity, employed tropes and figures too quaint or too solemn for the occasion. And the finical style is in part characterised by the writer's dislike to literal expressions, and affectedly substituting in their stead unnecessary tropes and figures. With these authors, a man's only child must always be his *only hope*, a country-maid becomes a *rural beauty*, or perhaps a *nymph of the groves;* if flattery sing at all, it must be a *syren song;* the shepherd's flute dwindles into an *oaten reed*, and his crook is exalted into a *sceptre*; the *silver lillies* rise from their *golden beds*, and *languish* to the *complaining* gale. A young woman, though a good Christian, cannot make herself agreeable without *sacrificing to the Graces*; nor hope to do any execution among the *gentle swains*, till a whole legion of *Cupids*, armed with *flames* and *darts*, and other weapons, begin to discharge from her eyes their formidable artillery. For the sake of variety, or of the verse, some of these figures may now and then find a place in a poem; but in prose, unless very sparingly used, they savour of affectation.

3. Tropes and Figures promote brevity; and brevity, united with perspicuity, is always agreeable. An example or two will be given in the next paragraph. Sentiments thus delivered, and imagery thus painted, are readily apprehended by the mind, make

a ſtrong impreſſion upon the fancy, and remain long in the memory: whereas too many words, even when the meaning is good, never fail to bring diſguſt and wearineſs. They argue a debility of mind which hinders the author from ſeeing his thoughts in one diſtinct point of view; and they alſo encourage a ſuſpicion, that there is ſomething faulty or defective in the matter. In the poetic ſtyle, therefore, which is addreſſed to the fancy and paſſions, and intended to make a vivid, a pleaſing, and a permanent impreſſion, brevity, and conſequently tropes and figures, are indiſpenſable. And a language will always be the better ſuited to poetical purpoſes, the more it admits of this brevity; —a character which is more conſpicuous in the Greek and Latin than in any modern tongue, and much leſs in the French than in the Italian or Engliſh.

4. Tropes and Figures contribute to ſtrength or energy of language, not only by their conciſeneſs, but alſo by conveying to the fancy ideas that are eaſily comprehended, and make a ſtrong impreſſion. We are powerfully affected with what we ſee, or feel, or hear. When a ſentiment comes enforced or illuſtrated by figures taken from objects of ſight, or touch, or hearing, one thinks, as it were, that one ſees, or feels, or hears, the thing ſpoken of; and thus, what in itſelf would perhaps be obſcure, or is merely intellectual, may be made to ſeize our attention

tention and intereſt our paſſions almoſt as effectually as if it were an object of outward ſenſe. When Virgil calls the Scipios *thunderbolts of war*, he very ſtrongly expreſſes in one word, and by one image, the rapidity of their victories, the noiſe their atchievements made in the world, and the ruin and conſternation that attended their irreſiſtible career. —— When Homer calls Ajax *the bulwark of the Greeks*, he paints with equal brevity his vaſt ſize and ſtrength, the difficulty of prevailing againſt him, and the confidence wherewith his countrymen repoſed on his valour. —— When Solomon ſays of the ſtrange woman, or harlot, that "her feet go "*down* to death," he lets us know, not only that her path ends in deſtruction, but alſo, that they who accompany her will find it eaſy to go forwards to ruin, and difficult to return to their duty. —— Satan's enormous magnitude, and refulgent appearance, his perpendicular aſcent through a region of darkneſs, and the inconceivable rapidity of his motion, are all painted out to our fancy by Milton, in one very ſhort ſimilitude,

Sprung upward, like — a pyramid of fire * :

To take in the full meaning of which figure, we muſt imagine ourſelves in chaos, and a vaſt luminous body riſing upward, near the

* Par. Loſt, book 2. verſ. 1013.

place

place where we are, ſo ſwiftly as to appear a continued track of light, and leſſening to the view according to the increaſe of diſtance, till it end in a point, and then diſappear; and all this muſt be ſuppoſed to ſtrike our eye at one inſtant.——Equal to this in propriety, though not in magnificence, is that allegory of Gray,

The paths of glory lead but to the grave:

Which preſents to the imagination a wide plain, where ſeveral roads appear, crouded with glittering multitudes, and iſſuing from different quarters, but drawing nearer and nearer as they advance, till they terminate in the dark and narrow houſe, where all their glories enter in ſucceſſion, and diſappear for ever.——When it is ſaid in ſcripture, of a good man who died, that he *fell aſleep*, what a number of ideas are at once conveyed to our imagination, by this beautiful and expreſſive figure! As a labourer, at the cloſe of day, goes to ſleep, with the ſatisfaction of having performed his work, and with the agreeable hope of awaking in the morning of a new day, refreſhed and chearful; ſo a good man, at the end of life, reſigns himſelf calm and contented to the will of his Maker, with the ſweet reflection of having endeavoured to do his duty, and with the tranſporting hope of ſoon awaking in the regions of light, to life and

and happineſs eternal. The figure alſo ſuggeſts, that to a good man the tranſition from life to death is even in the ſenſation no more painful, than when our faculties melt away into the pleaſing inſenſibility of ſleep.—— Satan flying among the ſtars is ſaid by Milton to "*Sail* between worlds and worlds;" which has an elegance and force far ſuperior to the proper word *Fly*. For by this alluſion to a ſhip, we are made to form a lively idea of his great ſize, and to conceive of his motion, that it was equable and majeſtic.—— Virgil uſes a happy figure to expreſs the ſize of the great wooden horſe, by means of which the Greeks were conveyed into Troy: "Equum divina Palladis arte *ædificant*."—— Milton is ſtill bolder when he ſays,

> Who would not ſing for Lycidas? he knew
> Himſelf to ſing, and *build the lofty rhime* *.

The phraſe, however, though bold, is emphatical; and gives a noble idea of the durability of poetry, as well as of the art and

* In the Latin phraſe *Condere carmen*, which Milton no doubt had in his view, the verb is of more general ſignification, than the Engliſh verb *to build*; and therefore the figure is bolder in Engliſh than Latin. It may even be doubted, whether *Condere carmen* be at all figurative; for *Condere* is reſolved by R. Stephanus into *Simul dare*. *Condere carmen*, *condere poema*, *condere hiſtoriam*, occur in Cicero and Pliny; but Milton's phraſe is much too daring for Engliſh proſe.

attention

attention requiſite to form a good poem. —— There are hundreds of tropical expreſſions in common uſe, incomparably more energetic than any proper words of equal brevity that could be put in their place. A cheek *burning* with bluſhes, is a trope which at once deſcribes the colour as it appears to the beholder, and the glowing heat as it is felt by the perſon bluſhing. *Chilled* with deſpondence, *petrefied* with aſtoniſhment, *thunderſtruck* with diſagreeable and unexpected intelligence, *melted* with love or pity, *diſſolved* in luxury, *hardened* in wickedneſs, *ſoftening* into remorſe, *inflamed* with deſire, *toſſed* with uncertainty, &c. — every one is ſenſible of the force of theſe and the like phraſes, and that they muſt contribute to the energy of compoſition.

5. Tropes and Figures promote ſtrength of expreſſion, and are in poetry peculiarly requiſite, becauſe they are often more *natural*, and more *imitative*, than proper words. In fact, this is ſo much the caſe, that it would be impoſſible to imitate the language of paſſion without them. It is true, that when the mind is agitated, one does not run out into allegories, or long-winded ſimilitudes, or any of the figures that require much attention and many words, or that tend to withdraw the fancy from the object of the paſſion. Yet the language of many paſſions muſt be figurative, notwithſtanding; becauſe they rouſe the fancy, and direct it to

objects congenial to their own nature, which diverſify the language of the ſpeaker with a multitude of alluſions. The fancy of a very angry man, for example, preſents to his view a train of diſagreeable ideas connected with the paſſion of anger, and tending to encourage it; and if he ſpeak without reſtraint during the paroxyſm of his rage, thoſe ideas will force themſelves upon him, and compel him to give them utterance. "Infernal "monſter! (he will ſay)—my blood boils "at him; he has uſed me like a dog; ne- "ver was man ſo injured as I have been by "this barbarian. He has no more ſenſe "of propriety than a ſtone. His counte- "nance is diabolical, and his ſoul as ugly "as his countenance. His heart is cold and "hard, and his reſolutions dark and bloody," &c. This ſpeech is wholly figurative. It is made up of *metaphors* and *hyperboles*, which, with the *proſopopeia* and *apoſtrophe*, are the moſt paſſionate of all the figures.——Lear, driven out of doors by his unnatural daughters, in the midſt of darkneſs, thunder, and tempeſt, naturally breaks forth (for his indignation is juſt now raiſed to the very higheſt pitch) into the following violent exclamation againſt the crimes of mankind, in which almoſt every word is figurative.

Tremble thou wretch,
That haſt within thee undivulged crimes
Unwhipt of juſtice. Hide thee, thou bloody hand,

Thou perjured, and thou ſimilar of virtue,
That art inceſtuous. Caitiff, to pieces ſhake,
That under covert, and convenient ſeeming,
Haſt practiſed on man's life. Cloſe pent-up guilts,
Rive your concealing continents, and cry
Theſe dreadful ſummoners grace.

—— The vehemence of maternal love, and ſorrow from the apprehenſion of loſing her child, make the Lady Conſtance utter a language that is ſtrongly figurative, tho' quite ſuitable to the condition and character of the ſpeaker. The paſſage is too long for a quotation, but concludes thus :

O Lord! my boy, my Arthur, my fair ſon,
My life, my joy, my food, my all the world,
My widow-comfort, and my ſorrow's cure *.

—— Similar to this, and equally expreſſive of conjugal love, is that beautiful hyperbole in Homer; where Andromache, to diſſuade her huſband from going out to the battle, tells him, that ſhe had now no mother, father, or brethren, all her kindred being dead, and her native country deſolate; and then tenderly adds,

But while my Hector yet ſurvives, I ſee
My father, mother, brethren, all in thee †.

* King John.

† Iliad, book 6.

As

As the paſſions that agitate the ſoul, and rouſe the fancy, are apt to vent themſelves in tropes and figures, ſo thoſe that depreſs the mind adopt for the moſt part a plain diction without any ornament. For to a dejected mind, wherein the imagination is generally inactive, it is not probable, that any great variety of ideas will preſent themſelves; and when theſe are few and familiar, the words that expreſs them muſt be ſimple. As no author equals Shakeſpeare in boldneſs or variety of figures, when he copies the ſtyle of thoſe violent paſſions that ſtimulate the fancy; ſo, when he would exhibit the human mind in a dejected ſtate, no uninſpired writer excels him in ſimplicity. The ſame Lear whoſe reſentment had impaired his underſtanding, while it broke out in the moſt boiſterous language, when, after ſome medical applications, he recovers his reaſon, his rage being now exhauſted, his pride humbled, and his ſpirits totally depreſſed, ſpeaks in a ſtyle than which nothing can be imagined more ſimple, or more affecting:

Pray, do not mock me;
I am a very fooliſh, fond old man,
Fourſcore and upward, and, to deal plainly with you,
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
Methinks I ſhould know you, and know this man,
Yet I am doubtful; for I am mainly ignorant
What place this is, and all the ſkill I have
Remembers not theſe garments; nor I know not

Where I did lodge laſt night. —— *

—— Deſdemona, ever gentle, artleſs, and ſincere, ſhocked at the unkindneſs of her huſband, and overcome with melancholy, ſpeaks in a ſtyle ſo beautifully ſimple, and ſo perfectly natural, that one knows not what to ſay in commendation of it:

My mother had a maid call'd Barbara;
She was in love, and he ſhe loved proved mad,
And did forſake her. She had a ſong of willow;
An old thing it was, but it expreſs'd her fortune,
And ſhe died ſinging it. That ſong to-night
Will not go from my mind; I have much to do,
But to go hang my head all at one ſide,
And ſing it like poor Barbara †.

Sometimes

* King Lear, act 4. ſcene 7.

† Othello, act 4. ſcene 3. This charming paſſage, tranſlated into the *finical ſtyle*, which, whatever be the ſubject or ſpeaker, muſt always be deſcriptive, enigmatical, and full of figures, would perhaps run thus:

Even now, ſad Memory to my thought recals
The nymph Dione, who, with pious care,
My much-loved mother, in my vernal years,
Attended: blooming was the maiden's form,
And on her brow Diſcretion ſat, and on
Her roſy cheek a thouſand Graces play'd.
O luckleſs was the day, when Cupid's dart,
Shot from a gentle ſwain's alluring eye,
Firſt thrill'd with pleaſing pangs her throbbing breaſt!
That gentle ſwain, ah! gentle now no more,
(Horrid to tell!), by ſudden phrenſy driven,

Ran

Sometimes the imagination, even when exerted to the utmoſt, takes in but few ideas. This happens when the attention is totally engroſſed by ſome very great object; admiration being one of thoſe emotions that rather ſuſpend the exerciſe of the faculties, than puſh them into action. And here too the ſimpleſt language is the moſt natural; as when Milton ſays of the Deity, that he ſits "high-throned above all height." And as this ſimplicity is more ſuitable to that one great exertion which occupies the ſpeaker's mind, than a more elaborate imagery or lan-

Ran howling to the wild: blood-tinctured fire
Glared from his haggard eyeballs, and on high
The hand of Horror raiſed his ragged hair,
And cold ſweat bathed his agonizing frame.
What didſt thou then, Dione! ill-ſtar'd maid!
What couldſt thou do! — From morn to dewy eve,
From Eve till roſy-finger'd Morn appear'd,
In a ſad ſong, a ſong of ancient days,
Warbling her wild woe to the pitying winds,
She ſat; the weeping willow was her theme,
And well the theme accorded with her woe;
Till Fate ſuppreſs'd at length th' unfiniſh'd lay.
Thus on Meander's flowery mantled ſide
The dying cygnet ſings, and ſinging dies.

I hope my young readers are all wiſer; but I believe there was a time, when I ſhould have been tempted to prefer this flaſhy tinſel to Shakeſpeare's ſind gold. I do not ſay, that in themſelves theſe lines are all bad, though ſeveral of them are; and in ſome ſorts of compoſition the greater part might perhaps be pardonable; but I ſay, that, conſidered in relation to the character and circumſtances of Deſdemona, they are all unnatural, and therefore not poetical.

guage

guage would have been; ſo has it alſo a more powerful effect in fixing and elevating the imagination of the hearer: for, to introduce other thoughts for the ſake of illuſtrating what cannot be illuſtrated, could anſwer no other purpoſe, than to draw off the attention from the principal idea. In theſe and the like caſes, the fancy left to itſelf will have more ſatisfaction in purſuing at leiſure its own ſpeculations, than in attending to thoſe of others; as they who ſee for the firſt time ſome admirable object, would chuſe rather to feaſt upon it in ſilence, than to have their thoughts interrupted by a long deſcription from another perſon, informing them of nothing but what they ſee before them, are already acquainted with, or may eaſily conceive.——On theſe principles, I cannot but think, that Milton's elaborate account of the creation of light *, excellent as it is in many particulars, is yet far leſs ſtriking to the mind, than that famous paſſage of Moſes, ſo juſtly admired by Longinus for its ſublimity, "And God ſaid, Let "there be light; and there was light." When I contemplate the idea ſuggeſted by

* Let there be light, God ſaid; and forthwith light
Ethereal, firſt of things, quinteſſence pure,
Sprung from the deep, and from her native eaſt
To journey through the aery gloom began,
Sphered in a radiant cloud; for yet the ſun
Was not; ſhe in a cloudy tabernacle
Sojourn'd the while. *Parad. Loſt*, vii. 244.

theſe

theſe few ſimple words, I fancy myſelf encompaſſed with the darkneſs of chaos; that I hear the Almighty Word, and at the ſame inſtant ſee light diffuſed over all the immenſity of nature. Here an object, the greateſt ſurely that can be imagined, the whole illuminated univerſe ſtarts at once into view. And the fancy ſeems to be aſſiſted not a little by the ſhortneſs and ſimplicity of the phraſe, which hint the inſtantaneouſneſs of the effect, and the facility wherewith the Firſt Cauſe operates in producing a work ſo unutterably beautiful, and ſo aſtoniſhingly great.

But to return from this digreſſion, which was only intended to ſhow, that though ſome thoughts and emotions require a figurative, others as naturally adopt a ſimple, ſtyle: ——I remarked, that the *hyperbole*, *proſopopeia*, and *apoſtrophe*, are among the moſt paſſionate figures. This deſerves illuſtration.

1. A very angry man is apt to think the injury he has juſt received greater than it really is; and, if he proceed immediately to retaliate by word or deed, ſeldom fails to exceed the due bounds, and to become injurious in his turn. The fond parent looks upon his child as a prodigy of genius and beauty; and the romantic lover will not be perſuaded that his miſtreſs has nothing ſupernatural either in her mind or perſon. Fear, in like manner, not only magnifies its object when real, but even forms an object out of nothing, and miſtakes the fictions of fancy

fancy for the intimations of ſenſe. — No wonder then, that they who ſpeak according to the impulſe of paſſion ſhould ſpeak *hyperbolically:* that the angry man ſhould exaggerate the injury he has received, and the vengeance he is going to inflict; that the ſorrowful ſhould magnify what they have loſt, and the joyful what they have obtained; that the lover ſhould ſpeak extravagantly of the beauty of his miſtreſs, the coward of the dangers he has encountered, and the credulous clown of the miracles performed by the juggler. In fact, theſe people would not do juſtice to what they feel, if they did not ſay more than the truth. The valiant man, on the other hand, as naturally adopts the diminiſhing hyberbole, when he ſpeaks of danger; and the man of ſenſe, when he is obliged to mention his own virtue or ability; becauſe it appears to him, or he is willing to conſider it, as leſs than the truth, or at beſt as inconſiderable. Contempt uſes the ſame figure; and therefore, Petruchio, affecting that paſſion, affects alſo the language of it:

> Thou lieſt, thou thread, thou thimble,
> Thou yard, three quarters, half yard, quarter, nail,
> Thou flea, thou nit, thou winter-cricket, thou!
> Braved in mine own houſe with a ſkein of thread!
> Away, thou rag, thou quantity, thou remnant *!

For ſome paſſions conſider their objects as

* Taming of the Shrew, act 4. ſcene 1.

mportant, and others as unimportant. Of he former ſort are anger, love, fear, admiration, joy, ſorrow, pride; of the latter are contempt and courage. Thoſe may be ſaid to ſubdue the mind to the object; and theſe, to ſubdue the object to the mind. And the former, when violent, always magnify their objects; whence the hyperbole called Amplification, or *Auxeſis*; and the latter as conſtantly diminiſh theirs; and give riſe to the hyperbole called *Meioſis*, or Diminution. — Even when the mind cannot be ſaid to be under the influence of any violent paſſion, we naturally employ the ſame figure, when we would impreſs another very ſtrongly with any idea. He is a walking ſhadow; he is worn to ſkin and bone; he has one foot in the grave, and the other following; — theſe and the like phraſes are proved to be natural by their frequency. — By introducing great ideas, the hyperbole is further uſeful in poetry, as a ſource of the ſublime; but, when employed injudiciouſly, is very apt to become ridiculous. Cowley makes Goliah as big as the hill down which he was marching *; and tells us, that when he came into the valley, he ſeemed to fill it, and to overtop the neighbouring mountains, (which, by the by, ſeems rather to leſſen the mountains and vallies, than to magnify

* Davideis, book 3.

the giant); nay, he adds, that the ſun ſtarted back when he ſaw the ſplendor of his arms. This poet ſeems to have thought, that the figure in queſtion could never be ſufficiently enormous; but Quintilian would have taught him, "Quamvis omnis hyperbole ultra fidem, non tamen eſſe debet "ultra modum." The reaſon is, that this figure, when exceſſive, betokens, rather abſolute infatuation, than intenſe emotion; and reſembles the efforts of a ranting tragedian, or the ravings of an enthuſiaſtic declaimer, who, by putting on the geſtures and looks of a lunatic, ſatisfy the diſcerning part of their audience, that, inſtead of feeling ſtrongly, they have no rational feelings at all. In the wildeſt energies of nature there is a modeſty, which the imitative artiſt will be careful never to overſtep.

2. That figure, by which things are ſpoken of as if they were perſons, is called *Proſopopeia*, or Perſonification. It is a bold figure, and yet is often natural. Long acquaintance recommends to ſome ſhare in our affection even things inanimate, as a houſe, a tree, a rock, a mountain, a country; and were we to leave ſuch a thing, without hope of return, we ſhould be inclined to addreſs it with a farewell, as if it were a percipient creature. Nay, we find that ignorant nations have actually worſhipped ſuch things, or conſidered them as the haunt of certain powerful beings. Dryads and Hamadryads were

were by the Greeks and Romans ſuppoſed to preſide over trees and groves; river-gods and nymphs over ſtreams and fountains; little deities, called *Lares* and *Penates*, were believed to be the guardians of hearths and houſes. In Scotland there is hardly a hill remarkable for the beauty of its ſhape, that was not in former times thought to be the habitation of fairies. Nay modern as well as ancient ſuperſtition has appropriated the waters to a peculiar ſort of demon or goblin, and peopled the very regions of death, the tombs and charnel-houſes, with multitudes of ghoſts and phantoms.—Beſides, when things inanimate make a ſtrong impreſſion upon us, whether agreeable or otherwiſe, we are apt to addreſs them in terms of affection or diſlike. The ſailor bleſſes the plank that brought him aſhore from the ſhipwreck; and the paſſionate man, and ſometimes even the philoſopher, will ſay bitter words to the ſtumbling-block that gave him a fall.—Moreover, a man agitated with any intereſting paſſion, eſpecially of long continuance, is apt to fancy that all nature ſympathiſes with him. If he has loſt a beloved friend, he thinks the ſun leſs bright than at other times; and in the ſighing of the winds and groves, in the lowings of the herd, and in the murmurs of the ſtream, he ſeems to hear the voice of lamentation. But when joy or hope predominate, the whole world aſſumes a gay appearance. In the contempla-

tion of every part of nature, of every condition of mankind, of every form of human ſociety, the benevolent and the pious man, the moroſe and the chearful, the miſer and the miſanthrope, finds occaſion to indulge his favourite paſſion, and ſees, or thinks he ſees, his own temper reflected back in the actions, ſympathies, and tendencies of other things and perſons. Our affections are indeed the medium through which we may be ſaid to ſurvey ourſelves, and every thing elſe; and whatever be our inward frame, we are apt to perceive a wonderful congeniality in the world without us. And hence, the fancy, when rouſed by real emotions, or by the pathos of compoſition, is eaſily reconciled to thoſe figures of ſpeech that aſcribe ſympathy, perception, and the other attributes of animal life, to things inanimate, or even to notions merely intellectual. — Motion, too, bears a cloſe affinity to action, and affects our imagination nearly in the ſame manner; and we ſee a great part of nature in motion; and by their ſenſible effects are led to contemplate energies innumerable. Theſe conduct the rational mind to the Great Firſt Cauſe; and theſe, in times of ignorance, diſpoſed the vulgar to believe in a variety of ſubordinate agents employed in producing thoſe appearances that could not otherwiſe be accounted for. Hence an endleſs train of fabulous deities, and of witches, demons, fairies, genii;

genii; which, if they prove our reaſon weak and our fancy ſtrong, prove alſo, that Perſonification is natural to the human mind; and that a right uſe of this figure may have a powerful effect, in fabulous writing eſpecially, to engage our ſympathy in behalf of things as well as perſons, for nothing (as was before obſerved) can give laſting delight to a moral being, but that which awakens ſympathy, and touches the heart: and tho' it be true, that we ſympathiſe in ſome degree even with inanimate things, yet what has, or is ſuppoſed to have, life, calls forth a more ſincere and more permanent fellow-feeling — Let it be obſerved further, that to awaken our ſympathetic feelings, a lively conception of their object is neceſſary. This indeed is true of almoſt all our emotions; their keenneſs is in proportion to the vivacity of the perceptions that excite them. Diſtreſs that we ſee is more affecting than what we only hear of *; a peruſal of the gayeſt ſcenes in a comedy does not rouſe the mind ſo effectually, as the preſence of a chearful companion; and the death of a friend is of greater energy in producing ſerioufneſs, and the conſideration of our latter end, than all the pathos of Young. Of deſcriptions addreſſed to the fancy, thoſe that are moſt vivid and pictureſque will generally be found to have the moſt powerful influence over our affec-

* Hor. Ar. Poet. verſ. 180.

tions

tions *; and thoſe that exhibit perſons engaged in action, and adorned with viſible *inſignia*, give a briſker impulſe to the faculties, than ſuch as convey intellectual ideas only, or images taken from ſtill life. No abſtract notion of Time, or of Love, can be ſo ſtriking to the fancy, as the image of an old man accoutered with a ſcythe, or of a beautiful boy with wings and a bow and arrows: and no phyſiological account of Frenzy could ſuggeſt ſo vivid an idea, as the poet has given us in that exquiſite portrait,

> And moody Madneſs laughing wild, amid ſevereſt woe.

And for this reaſon partly it is, that the Epic poet, in order to work the more effectually upon our paſſions and imagination, refers the ſecret ſprings of human conduct, and the viciſſitudes of human affairs, to the agency of perſonified cauſes; that is, to the machinery of gods and goddeſſes, angels, demons, magicians, and other powerful beings. And hence, in all ſublime poetry, life and motion, with their ſeveral modes and attributes, are liberally beſtowed on thoſe

* I ſay *generally*; for it is not always ſo. Deſcriptions of very great or terrible objects have ſometimes a greater effect upon the mind, when expreſſed with ſome degree of obſcurity, where "more is meant than meets the ear," than if they had been pictured out in the moſt lively manner. See part 1. chap. 5. § 4.

objects

objects wherewith the author intends that we ſhould be ſtrongly impreſſed: ſcenes perfectly inanimate, and ſtill tending rather to diffuſe a languor over the mind, than to communicate to our internal powers thoſe lively energies, without which a being eſſentially active can never receive complete gratification. — Laſtly, ſome violent paſſions are peculiarly inclined to change things into perſons. The horrors of his mind haunted Oreſtes in the ſhape of furies. Conſcience in the form of the murdered perſon, ſtares the murderer in the face, and often terrifies him to diſtraction. The ſuperſtitious man, travelling alone in the dark, miſtakes a white ſtone for a ghoſt, a buſh for a demon, a tree waving with the wind for an enormous giant brandiſhing a hundred arms. The lunatic and enthuſiaſt converſe with perſons who exiſt only in their own diſtempered fancy: and the glutton, and the miſer, if they were to give utterance to all their thoughts, would often, I dare ſay, ſpeak, the one of his gold, the other of his belly, not only as a perſon, but as a god, — the object of his warmeſt love, and moſt devout regard. — More need not be ſaid to prove, that Perſonification is natural, and may frequently contribute to the pathos, energy, and beauty of poetic language.

3. *Apoſtrophe*, or a ſudden diverſion of ſpeech from one perſon to another perſon or thing, is a figure nearly related to the former.

mer. Poets ſometimes make uſe of it, in order to help out their verſe, or merely to give variety to their ſtyle: but on thoſe occaſions it is to be conſidered as rather a trick of art, than an effort of nature. It is moſt natural, and moſt pathetic, when the perſon or thing to whom the apoſtrophe is made, and for whoſe ſake we give a new direction to our ſpeech, is in our eyes eminently diſtinguiſhed for good or evil, or raiſes within us ſome ſudden and powerful emotion, ſuch as the hearer would acquieſce in, or at leaſt acknowledge to be reaſonable. But this, like the other pathetic figures, muſt be uſed with great prudence. For if, inſtead of calling forth the hearer's ſympathy, it ſhould only betray the levity of the ſpeaker, or ſuch wanderings of his mind as neither the ſubject nor the occaſion would lead one to expect, it will then create diſguſt, inſtead of approbation. — The orator, therefore, muſt not attempt the paſſionate apoſtrophe, till the minds of the hearers be prepared to join in it. And every audience is not equally obſequious in this reſpect. In the forum of ancient Rome that would have paſſed for ſublime and pathetic, which in the moſt reſpectable Britiſh auditories would appear ridiculous. For our ſtyle of public ſpeaking is cool and argumentative, and partakes leſs of enthuſiaſm than the Roman did, and much leſs than the modern French or Italian. Of Britiſh eloquence, particular-

ly that of the pulpit, the chief recommendations are gravity and ſimplicity. And it is vain to ſay, that our oratory *ought* to be more vehement: for that matter depends on cauſes, which it is not only inexpedient, but impoſſible to alter; namely, on the character and ſpirit of the people, and their rational notions in regard to religion, policy, and literature. The exclamations of Cicero would weigh but little in our parliament; and many of thoſe which we meet with in French ſermons would not be more effectual if attempted in our pulpit. To ſee one of our preachers, who the moment before was a cool reaſoner, a temperate ſpeaker, an humble Chriſtian, and an orthodox divine, break out into a ſudden apoſtrophe to the immortal powers, or to the walls of the church, tends to force a ſmile, rather than a tear, from thoſe among us who reflect, that there is nothing in the ſubject, and ſhould be nothing in the orator, to warrant ſuch wanderings of fancy, or vehemence of emotion. If he be careful to cultivate a pure ſtyle, and a grave and graceful utterance, a Britiſh clergyman, who ſpeaks from conviction the plain unaffected words of truth and ſoberneſs, of benevolence and piety, will, if I miſtake not, convey more pathetic, as well as more permanent, impreſſions to the heart, and be more uſeful as a Chriſtian teacher, than if he were to put in practice all the

attitudes of Roſcius, and all the tropes and figures of Cicero.

But where the language of paſſion and enthuſiaſm is permitted to diſplay itſelf, whatever raiſes any ſtrong emotion, whether it be animated or inanimate, abſent or preſent, ſenſible or intellectual, may give riſe to the apoſtrophe. A man in a diſtant country, ſpeaking of the place of his birth, might naturally exclaim, "O my dear native land, "ſhall I never ſee thee more!" Or, when ſome great misfortune befals him, "Happy are ye, O my parents, that ye are not "alive to ſee this."—We have a beautiful apoſtrophe in the third book of the Eneid, where Eneas, who is telling his ſtory to Dido, happening to mention the death of his father, makes a ſudden addreſs to him as follows:

——— hic, pelagi tot tempeſtatibus actus,
Heu, genitorem, omnis curæ caſuſque levamen,
Amitto Anchiſen; — hic me, pater optime, feſſum
Deſeris, heu, tantis nequicquam erepte periclis!

This apoſtrophe has a pleaſing effect. It ſeems to intimate, that the love which the hero bore his father was ſo great, that when he mentioned him, he forgot every thing elſe; and, without minding his company, one of whom was a queen, ſuddenly addreſſed himſelf to that which, though preſent only in idea, was ſtill a principal object

ject of his affection. An emotion ſo warm and ſo reaſonable cannot fail to command the ſympathy of the reader. — When Michael, in the eleventh book of Paradiſe Loſt, announces to Adam and Eve the neceſſity of their immediate departure from the garden of Eden, the poet's art in preſerving the decorum of the two characters is very remarkable. Pierced to the heart at the thought of leaving that happy place, Eve, in all the violence of ungovernable ſorrow, breaks forth into a pathetic apoſtrophe to Paradiſe, to the flowers ſhe had reared, and to the nuptial bower ſhe had adorned. Adam makes no addreſs to the walks, the trees, or the flowers of the garden, the loſs whereof did not ſo much afflict him; but, in his reply to the Archangel, expreſſes, without a figure, his regret for being baniſhed from a place where he had ſo oft been honoured with a ſenſible manifeſtation of the Divine Preſence. The uſe of the apoſtrophe in the one caſe, and the omiſſion of it in the other, not only gives a beautiful variety to the ſtyle, but alſo marks that ſuperior elevation and compoſure of mind, by which the poet had all along diſtinguiſhed the character of Adam. — One of the fineſt applications of this figure that is any where to be ſeen, is in the fourth book of the ſame Poem; where the author, catching by ſympathy the devotion of our firſt parents, ſuddenly drops his narrative, and

joins his voice to theirs in adoring the Father of the univerſe.

Thus at their ſhady lodge arrived, both ſtood,
Both turn'd, and under open ſky adored
The God that made both ſky, air, earth, and heaven,
Which they beheld, the moon's reſplendent globe,
And ſtarry pole: — Thou alſo mad'ſt the night,
Maker Omnipotent, and thou the day,
Which we in our appointed work employ'd
Have finiſh'd. ———

Milton took the hint of this fine contrivance from a well-known paſſage of Virgil:

Hic juvenum chorus, ille ſenum; qui carmine laudes
Herculeas et facta ferant; ———
——— ut duros mille labores
Rege ſub Euryſtheo, fatis Junonis iniquæ
Pertulerit: — Tu nubigenas, invicte, bimembres
Hylæum Pholoumque manu; tu Creſia mactas
Prodigia. ——— *

The beauty ariſing from diverſified compoſition is the ſame in both, and very great in each. But every reader muſt *feel*, that the figure is incomparably more affecting to the mind in the imitation, than in the original. So true it is, that the moſt rational

* See a ſimilar inſtance, Taſſo Gier. lib. 18. ſt. 14.

emotions

emotions raiſe the moſt intenſe fellow-feeling; and that the apoſtrophe is then the moſt emphatical, when it diſplays thoſe workings of human affection, which are at once ardent, and well-founded.

A full diſcuſſion of the preſent topic would require a methodical and more particular account of the ſeveral tropes and figures, their congruity to human emotions, and their effects in compoſition. But theſe few remarks will perhaps be thought to prove with ſufficient evidence, the utility of figurative expreſſion in making language more *pleaſing* and more *natural*. I ſhall therefore only add, that tropes and figures, particularly the *metaphor*, *ſimilitude*, and *allegory*, are further uſeful in beautifying language, by ſuggeſting, together with the thoughts eſſential to the ſubject, an endleſs variety of agreeable images, for which there would be no place, if writers were always to confine themſelves to the *proper* names of things. And this beauty and variety, judiciouſly applied, is ſo far from diſtracting, that it tends rather to fix, the attention, and captivate the heart of the reader, by giving light, and life, and pathos to the whole compoſition.

II. The end of Poetry, above all other literary arts, is to pleaſe by imitating nature. I have now ſhown, that by tropes and figures language may be made more natural and more pleaſing, than it could be without them. It follows, that tropes and figures

are

are more neceſſary to poetry, than to any other mode of writing: — which is the ſecond point propoſed to be illuſtrated in this ſection.

The ſame point might be proved from other conſiderations. Language, as ſhown already, is then natural, when it is ſuitable to the ſuppoſed condition of the ſpeaker. Figurative language is peculiarly ſuitable to the ſuppoſed condition of the poet; becauſe figures are ſuggeſted by the fancy; and the fancy of him who compoſes poetry is more employed, than that of any other author. Of all hiſtorical, philoſophical, and theological reſearches, the object is *real* truth, which is fixed and permanent. The aim of rhetorical declamation (according to Cicero) is *apparent* truth; which, being leſs determinate, leaves the fancy of the ſpeaker more free, gives greater ſcope to the inventive powers, and ſupplies the materials of a more figurative phraſeology. But the poet is ſubject to no reſtraints, but thoſe of veriſimilitude; which is ſtill leſs determinate than rhetorical truth. He ſeeks not to convince the judgement of his reader by arguments of either real or apparent cogency; he means only to pleaſe and intereſt him, by an appeal to his ſenſibility and imagination. His own imagination is therefore continually at work, ranging through the whole of real and probable exiſtence, "glancing from "heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,"

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in queſt of images and ideas ſuited to the emotions he himſelf feels, and to the ſympathies he would communicate to others. And, conſequently, figures of ſpeech, the offſpring of excurſive fancy, muſt (if he ſpeak according to what he is ſuppoſed to think and feel, that is, according to his ſuppoſed condition) tincture the language of the poet more than that of any other compoſer. So that, if figurative diction be unnatural in geometry, becauſe all wanderings of fancy are unſuitable, and even impoſſible, to the geometrician, while intent upon his argument; it is, upon the ſame principle, perfectly natural, and even unavoidable in poetry; becauſe the more a poet attends to his ſubject, and the better qualified he is to do it juſtice, the more active will his imagination be, and the more diverſified the ideas that preſent themſelves to his mind. —— Beſides, the true poet addreſſes himſelf to the paſſions and ſympathies of mankind; which, till his own be raiſed, he cannot hope to do with ſucceſs. And it is the nature of many paſſions, though not of all, to increaſe the activity of imagination: and an active imagination naturally vents itſelf in figurative language; nay, unleſs reſtrained by a correct taſte, has a tendency to exceed in it; — of which Biſhop Taylor, and Lord Verulam, two geniuſes different in kind, but of the higheſt order, are memorable examples.

I said, that "the poet seeks not to convince the judgement of his reader by arguments of either real or apparent cogency."——I do not mean, that in poetry argument has no place. The most legitimate reasoning, the soundest philosophy, and narratives purely historical, may appear in a poem, and contribute greatly to the honour of the author, and to the importance of his work. All this we have in Paradise Lost.——I mean, that what distinguishes *pure* poetry from other writing, is its aptitude, not to sway the judgement by reasoning, but to please the fancy, and move the passions, by a lively imitation of nature. Nor would I exclude poetical embellishment from history, or even from philosophy. Plato's Dialogues and Addison's Moral Essays abound in poetic imagery; and Livy and Tacitus often amuse their readers with poetical description. In like manner, though Geometry and Physics be different sciences; — though abstract ideas be the subject, and pure demonstration or intuition the evidence, of the former; and though the material universe, and the informations of sense, be the subject and the evidence of the latter; — yet have these sciences been united by the best philosophers, and very happy effects resulted from the union.——In one and the same work, poetry, history, philosophy, and oratory, may doubtless be blended; nay, these arts have all been actually blended in

one and the ſame work, not by Milton only, but alſo by Homer, Virgil, Lucan, and Shakeſpeare. Yet ſtill theſe arts are different; — different in their ends, and principles, and in the faculties of the mind to which they are reſpectively addreſſed: and it is eaſy to perceive, when a writer employs one, and when another.

III. A reaſon why tropes and figures are more neceſſary in ſome ſorts of poetry, than in others, it is not difficult to aſſign. This depends on the condition of the ſuppoſed ſpeaker, particularly on the ſtate of his imagination and paſſions. When the ſoul pines with ſorrow, or languiſhes in love, it keeps its view more ſteadily fixed on one or a few ideas, than when it is poſſeſſed with enthuſiaſm, or agitated by jealouſy, revenge, indignation, anxiety, or any other turbulent emotion. In the former caſe it is inactive; in the latter, reſtleſs;

—— Magno curarum fluctuat æſtu,
Atque animum nunc huc celerem, nunc dividit illuc,
In parteſque rapit varias, perque omnia verſat;

and therefore in the one caſe it will be occupied by few ideas, and in the other by many. The ſtyle, therefore, of the amorous or mournful elegy, in order to be imitative of the language of ſorrow or deſponding love, muſt be ſimpler, and leſs diverſified by

figures, than that of the dithyrambic ſong, or of any other poem in which the ſpeaker is ſuppoſed to be greatly agitated.

I have heard the fineſt Ode in the world blamed for the boldneſs of its figures, and for what the critic was pleaſed to call obſcurity. He had, I ſuppoſe, formed his taſte upon Anacreon and Waller, whoſe Odes are indeed very ſimple, and would have been very abſurd, if they had not been ſimple. But let us recollect the circumſtances of Anacreon, (conſidered as the ſpeaker of his own poetry), and of Gray's Welſh Bard. The former warbles his lays, reclining on a bed of flowers, diſſolved in tranquillity and indolence, while all his faculties ſeem to be engroſſed by one or a few pleaſurable objects. The latter, juſt eſcaped from the maſſacre of his brethren, under the complicated agitations of grief, revenge, and deſpair; and ſurrounded with the ſcenery of rocks, mountains, and torrents, ſtupendous by nature, and now rendered hideous by deſolation, imprecates perdition upon the bloody Edward; and, ſeized with prophetic enthuſiaſm, foretells in the moſt alarming ſtrains, and typifies by the moſt dreadful images, the diſaſters that were to overtake his family and deſcendents. If perſpicuity and ſimplicity be natural in the ſongs of Anacreon, as they certainly are, a figurative ſtyle and deſultory compoſition are no leſs natural in this inimitable performance of Gray. And if

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real prophecy muſt always be ſo obſcure, as not to be fully underſtood till it is accompliſhed, becauſe otherwiſe it would interfere with the free agency of man, that poem which imitates the ſtyle of prophecy, muſt alſo, if natural, be to a certain degree obſcure; not indeed in the images or words, but in the alluſions. And it is in the alluſions only, not in the words or images, (for theſe are moſt emphatical and pictureſque), that the poem partakes of obſcurity; and even its alluſions will hardly ſeem obſcure to thoſe who are acquainted with the hiſtory of England. Thoſe critics, therefore, who find fault with this poem, becauſe it is not ſo ſimple as the ſongs of Anacreon, or the love-verſes of Shenſtone and Waller, may as well blame Shakeſpeare, becauſe Othello does not ſpeak in the ſweet and ſimple language of Deſdemona. Horace has no where attempted a theme of ſuch animation and ſublimity, as this of Gray; and yet Horace, like his maſter Pindar, is often bold in his tranſitions, and in the ſtyle of many of his odes extremely figurative. But this we not only excuſe, but applaud, when we conſider, that in thoſe odes the aſſumed character of the ſpeaker is enthuſiaſm, which in all its operations is ſomewhat violent, and muſt therefore give a peculiar vehemence both to thought and to language.

On what principle, then, it may be ſaid, are we to look for ſimplicity and exact ar-

rangement, in the ſtyle of an Epic poem? Why is not the language of the Iliad and Eneid as figurative as that of Pindar?—To this I anſwer, firſt, That the aſſumed character of the Epic poet is calm inſpiration, the effects whereof upon the mind muſt be ſuppoſed to be very different from thoſe produced by enthuſiaſm or prophetic rapture; regularity and compoſure being as eſſential to the former, as wildneſs and vehemence are to the latter: and, ſecondly, That a very figurative ſtyle continued through a long work becomes tireſome; and therefore, that all poems of great length ought to be methodical in the plan, and ſimple in the execution. Abrupt tranſition, boldneſs of figure, and thoughts elevated almoſt to extravagance, may pleaſe in a ſhort poem; as the dainties of a banquet, and the ſplendour of a triumph, may amuſe for a day: but much feaſting deſtroys health, and perpetual glare and tumult ſtupify the ſenſes; and the high lyric ſtyle continued through many pages would fatigue the attention, confound the judgement, and bewilder the fancy.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Of the Sound of Poetical Language.

IT is folly to prefer ſound to ſenſe. Yet the ear, like every other perceptive faculty, is capable of gratification; and therefore to the ſound of words ſome regard is to be had, even in proſe. For ill-ſounding language can never be agreeable, either to the hearer or to the ſpeaker; and of different modifications of well-ſounding language ſome will be found to be more agreeable than others. It is the buſineſs of the poet to make his ſtyle as agreeable, and conſequently as pleaſing to the ear, as the nature of the ſubject will allow. And to the harmony of language it behoves him, more than any other writer, to attend; as it is more eſpecially his concern to render his work pleaſurable. In fact we find, that no poet was ever popular who did not poſſeſs the art of harmonious compoſition.

What I have to ſay on the ſubject of Poetical Harmony may be referred to one or other of theſe heads: Sweetneſs, Meaſure, and Imitation.

I. In order to give *ſweetneſs* to language, either

either in verſe or proſe, all words of harſh ſound, difficult pronunciation, or unwieldy magnitude, are to be avoided as much as poſſible, unleſs when they have in the ſound ſomething peculiarly emphatical; and words are to be ſo placed in reſpect of one another, as that diſcordant combinations may not reſult from their union. But in poetry this is more neceſſary than in proſe; poetical language being underſtood to be an imitation of natural language improved to that perfection which is conſiſtent with probability. To poetry, therefore, a greater latitude muſt be allowed than to proſe, in expreſſing, by tropes and figures of pleaſing ſound, thoſe ideas whereof the proper names are in any reſpect offenſive, either to the ear or to the fancy *.

II. How far verſification or *regular meaſure* may be eſſential to this art, has been diſputed by critical writers; ſome holding it to be indiſpenſably neceſſary, and ſome not neceſſary at all. Without recapitulating what has been ſaid by others, I ſhall only deliver my own opinion, which, if I miſtake not, will be found conſiſtent with the principles already eſtabliſhed.

Firſt, then, I am of opinion, that to poetry verſe is not eſſential. In a proſe work, we may have the fable, the arrangement, and a great deal of the pathos, and language,

* See part 2. chap. 1. ſect. 3. § I. 1. 2.

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of poetry; and such a work is certainly a poem, though perhaps not a perfect one. For how absurd would it be to say, that by changing the position only of a word or two in each line, one might divest Homer's Iliad of the poetical character! At this rate, the arts of poetry and versification would be the same; and the rules in Despauter's Grammar, and the moral distichs ascribed to Cato, would be as real poetry as any part of Virgil. In fact, some very ancient poems, when translated into a modern tongue, are far less poetical in verse than in prose; the alterations necessary to adapt them to our numbers being detrimental to their sublime simplicity; of which any person of taste will be sensible, who compares our common prose-version of Job, the Psalms, and Song of Solomon, with the best metrical paraphrase of those books that has yet appeared *. Nay,

* Madame Dacier, zealous to vindicate her Homer, seems to carry the encomium on prose-translation rather too far, when she exclaims, "Ouy, je ne crains "point de le dire, et je pourrois le prouver, les pöetes "traduits en vers cessent d'etre pöetes." —— But she is right in what she says a little after: "En fait de traduc-"tion, il y a *souvent* dans la prose une précision, une "beauté, et une force, dont la pöesie ne peut approcher. "Les livres des Prophetes, et les Pseaumes, dans la "vulgate meme, sont pleins de passages, que le plus "grand pöete du monde ne sçauroit rendre en vers, "sans leur faire perdre de leur majesté, et de leur éner-"gie."

Préface a l' Iliade de Mad. Dacier, p. 39.

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in many cafes, Comedy will be more poetical, becauſe more pleaſing and natural, in proſe, than in verſe. By verſifying Tom Jones and The Merry Wives of Windſor, we ſhould ſpoil the two fineſt Comic poems, the one Epic, the other Dramatical, now in the world.

But, ſecondly, Though verſe be not eſſential to poetry, it is neceſſary to the perfection of all poetry that admits of it. Verſe is to poetry, what colours are to painting *. A painter might diſplay great genius, and draw maſterly figures with chalk or ink; but if he intend a perfect picture, he muſt employ in his work as many colours as are ſeen in the object he imitates. Or, to adopt a beautiful compariſon of Demoſthenes, quoted by Ariſtotle †, "Verſification is to poetry "what bloom is to the human counte-"nance." A good face is agreeable when the bloom is gone; and good poetry may pleaſe without verſification; harmonious numbers may ſet off an indifferent poem, and a fine bloom indifferent features: but, without verſe, poetry is incomplete; and

* Horace ſeems to hint at the ſame compariſon, when, after ſpecifying the ſeveral ſorts of verſe ſuitable to Epic, Elegiac, Lyric, and Dramatic Poetry, he adds,

Deſcriptas ſervare vices, *operumque colores*,
Cur ego, ſi nequeo ignoroque, Poeta ſalutor?
Ar. Poet. verſ. 86.

† Ariſtot. Rhetor. lib. 3. cap. 4.

beauty is not perfect, unleſs to ſweetneſs and regularity of feature there be ſuperadded,

> The bloom of young deſire, and purple light of love.

If numbers are neceſſary to the perfection of the higher poetry, they are no leſs ſo to that of the lower kinds, to Paſtoral, Song, and Satire, which have little beſides the language and verſification to diſtinguiſh them from proſe; and which ſome ancient authors are unwilling to admit to the rank of poems; —though I think it too nice a ſcruple, both becauſe ſuch writings are commonly termed Poetical, and alſo becauſe there is, even in them, ſomething that may not improperly be conſidered as an imitation of nature.

That the rhythm and meaſures of verſe are naturally agreeable; and therefore, that by theſe poetry may be made more pleaſing than it would be without them, is evident from this, that children and illiterate people, whoſe admiration we cannot ſuppoſe to be the effect of habit or prejudice, are exceedingly delighted with them. In many proverbial ſayings, where there is neither rhime nor alliteration *, rhythm is obviouſly ſtudied. Nay, the uſe of rhythm in poetry is univer-

* See Eſſay on Laughter, chap. 2. ſect. 3.

ſal; whereas alliteration and rhime, though reliſhed by ſome nations, are not much ſought after by others. And we need not be at a loſs to account for the agreeableneſs of proportion and order, if we reflect, that they ſuggeſt the agreeable ideas of contrivance and ſkill, at the ſame time that they render the connection of things obvious to the underſtanding, and imprint it deeply on the memory *. Verſe, by promoting diſtinct and eaſy remembrance, conveys ideas to the mind with energy, and enlivens every emotion the poet intends to raiſe in the reader or hearer. Beſides, when we attend to verſes, after hearing one or two, we become acquainted with the meaſure, which therefore we always look for in the ſequel. This perpetual interchange of hope and gratification is a ſource of delight; and to this in part is owing the pleaſure we take in the rhimes of modern poetry. And hence we ſee, that though an incorrect rhime, or untuneable verſe, be in itſelf, and compared with an important ſentiment, a very trifling matter; yet it is no trifle in regard to its effects on the hearer; becauſe it brings diſappointment, and ſo gives a temporary ſhock to the mind, and interrupts the current of the affections; and becauſe it ſuggeſts the diſagreeable ideas of negligence or want of

* On the effects of Rhythm in muſic, ſee above, part 1. chap. 6. ſect. 2. § 4.

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ſkill on the part of the author. And therefore, as the public ear becomes more delicate, the negligence will be more glaring, and the diſappointment more intenſely felt; and correctneſs of rhime and of meaſure will of courſe be the more indiſpenſable. In our tongue, rhime is more neceſſary to Lyric, than to Heroic poetry. The reaſon ſeems to be, that in the latter the ear can of itſelf perceive the boundary of the meaſure, becauſe the lines are all of equal length nearly, and every good reader makes a ſhort pauſe at the end of each; whereas, in the former, the lines vary in length; and therefore the rhime is requiſite to make the meaſure and rhythm ſufficiently perceptible. Cuſtom too may have ſome influence. Engliſh Odes without rhime are uncommon; and therefore have ſomething awkward about them, or ſomething at leaſt to which the public ear is not yet thoroughly reconciled.

Moreover, in poetry, as in muſic, Rhythm is the ſource of much pleaſing variety; of variety tempered with uniformity, and regulated by art: inſomuch, that, notwithſtanding the likeneſs of one hexameter verſe to another, it is not common, either in Virgil or in Homer, to meet with two contiguous hexameters, whoſe rhythm is exactly the ſame. And though all Engliſh heroic verſes conſiſt of five feet, among which the Iambic predominates; yet this meaſure, in

reſpect of rhythm alone, is ſuſceptible of more than thirty varieties. And let it be remarked further, that different kinds of verſe, by being adapted to different ſubjects and modes of writing, give variety to the poetic language, and multiply the charms of this pleaſing art.

What has formerly been ſhown to be true in regard to ſtyle, will alſo in many caſes hold true of verſification, "that it is then "*natural*, when it is adapted to the *ſuppoſed* "*condition* of the ſpeaker."—In the Epopee, the poet aſſumes the character of calm inſpiration; and therefore his language muſt be elevated, and his numbers majeſtic and uniform. A peaſant ſpeaking in heroic or hexameter verſe is no improbability here; becauſe his words are ſuppoſed to be tranſmitted by one who will of his own accord give them every ornament neceſſary to reduce them into dignified meaſure; as an eloquent man, in a ſolemn aſſembly, recapitulating the ſpeech of a clown, would naturally expreſs it in pure and perſpicuous language. The uniform heroic meaſure will ſuit any ſubject of dignity, whether narrative or didactic, that admits or requires uniformity of ſtyle.—In Tragedy, where the imitation of real life is more perfect than in Epic poetry, the uniform magnificence of Epic numbers might be improper; becauſe the heroes and heroines are ſuppoſed to ſpeak in their own perſons, and according to the immediate

immediate impulſe of paſſion and ſentiment. Yet even in Tragedy, the verſification may be both harmonious and dignified; becauſe the characters are taken chiefly from high life, and the events from a remote period; and becauſe the higher poetry is permitted to imitate nature, not as it is, but in that ſtate of perfection, in which it might be. The Greeks and Romans conſidered their hexameter as too artificial for Dramatic poetry, and therefore in tragedy, and even in comedy, made uſe of the Iambic, and ſome other meaſures that came near the cadence of converſation: we uſe the Iambic both in the epic and dramatic poem; but, for the moſt part, it is, or ought to be, much more elaborate in the former, than in the latter. — In Dramatic Comedy, where the manners and concerns of familiar life are exhibited, Verſe would ſeem to be unnatural, except it be ſo like the ſound of common diſcourſe, as to be hardly diſtinguiſhable from it. Cuſtom, however, may in ſome countries determine otherwiſe; and againſt cuſtom, in theſe matters, it is vain to argue. — The profeſſed enthuſiaſm of the dithyrambic poet renders wildneſs, variety, and a ſonorous harmony of numbers peculiarly ſuitable to his odes. The love-ſonnet, and Anacreontic ſong, will be leſs various, more regular, and of a ſofter harmony; becauſe the ſtate of mind expreſſed in it has more compoſure. — Philoſophy can

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ſcarce go further in this inveſtigation, without deviating into whim and hypotheſis. The particular ſorts of verſe, to be adopted in the lower ſpecies of poetry, are determined by faſhion chiefly, and the practice of approved authors.

III. The origin and principles of imitative harmony, or of that artifice by which the ſound is made, as Pope ſays, "an "echo to the ſenſe," may be explained in the following manner.

It is pleaſing to obſerve the uniformity of nature in all her operations. Between moral and material beauty and harmony, between moral and material deformity and diſſonance, there obtains a very ſtriking analogy. The viſible and audible expreſſions of almoſt every virtuous emotion are agreeable to the eye and the ear, and thoſe of almoſt every criminal paſſion diſagreeable. The looks, the attitudes, and the vocal ſounds, natural to benevolence, to gratitude, to compaſſion, to piety, are in themſelves graceful and pleaſing; while anger, diſcontent, deſpair, and cruelty bring diſcord to the voice, deformity to the features, and diſtortion to the limbs. That flowing curve, which painters know to be eſſential to the beauty of animal ſhape, gives place to a multiplicity of right lines and ſharp angles in the countenance and geſture of him who knits his brows, ſtretches his noſtrils, grinds his teeth, and clenches his fiſt; whereas devotion,

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magnanimity, benevolence, contentment, and good-humour, ſoften the attitude, and give a more graceful ſwell to the outline of every feature. Certain vocal tones accompany certain mental emotions. The voice of ſorrow is feeble and broken, that of deſpair boiſterous and incoherent; joy aſſumes a ſweet and ſprightly note, fear a weak and tremulous cadence; the tones of love and benevolence are muſical and uniform, thoſe of rage loud and diſſonant; the voice of the ſedate reaſoner is equable and grave, but not unpleaſant; and he who declaims with energy employs many varieties of modulation ſuited to the various emotions that predominate in his diſcourſe.

But it is not in the language of paſſion only, that the human voice varies its tone, or the human face its features. Every ſtriking ſentiment, and every intereſting idea, has an effect upon it. One would eſteem that perſon no adept in Narrative eloquence, who ſhould deſcribe with the very ſame accent, ſwift and ſlow motion, extreme labour and eaſy performance, agreeable ſenſation and excruciating pain; who ſhould talk of the tumult of a tempeſtuous ocean, the roar of thunder, the devaſtations of an earthquake, or an Egyptian pyramid tumbling into ruins, in the ſame tone of voice wherewith he deſcribes the murmur of a rill, the warbling of the harp of Eolus, the ſwinging of a cradle, or the deſcent of an angel.

angel. Elevation of mind gives dignity to the voice. From Achilles, Sarpedon, and Othello, we ſhould as naturally expect a manly and ſonorous accent, as a nervous ſtyle and majeſtic attitude. Coxcombs and bullies, while they aſſume airs of importance and valour, affect alſo a dignified articulation.

Since the tones of natural language are ſo various, Poetry, which imitates the language of nature, muſt alſo vary its tones; and, in reſpect of ſound as well as of meaning, be framed after that model of ideal perfection, which the variety and energy of the human articulate voice render probable. This is the more eaſily accompliſhed, becauſe, in every language, there is between the ſound and ſenſe of certain words a perceptible analogy; which, though not ſo accurate as to lead a foreigner from the ſound to the ſignification *, is yet accurate enough

* There is in Taſſo's *Gieruſalemme Liberata* a famous ſtanza, of which Rouſſeau ſays, that a good ear and ſincere heart are alone ſufficient to enable one to judge of it. The imitative harmony and the poetry are indeed admirable; but I doubt whether a perſon who underſtands neither Italian nor Latin could even gueſs at the meaning from the ſound. I have attempted it in Engliſh, but am ſenſible of my inability to do it juſtice.

Chiama gli habitator de l'ombre eterne
Il rauco ſuon de la tartarea tromba:
Treman le ſpacioſe atre caverne,
Et l'aer cieco a quel rumor rimbomba;

enough to ſhow, that, in forming ſuch words, regard has been had to the imitative qualities of vocal ſound. Such, in Engliſh, are the words yell, craſh, crack, hiſs, roar, murmur, and many others.

All the particular laws that regulate this ſort of imitation, as far as they are founded in nature, and liable to the cognizance of philoſophy, depend on the general law of ſtyle above mentioned. Together with the other circumſtances of the ſuppoſed ſpeaker, the poet takes into conſideration the tone of voice ſuitable to the ideas that occupy his mind, and thereto adapts the ſound of his language, if it can be done conſiſtently with eaſe and elegance of expreſſion. But when this imitative harmony is too much ſought after, or words appear to be choſen for ſound rather than ſenſe, the verſe becomes finical and ridiculous *.

Words

Ne ſtridendo coſi da le ſuperne
Regioni del cielo il folgor piomba;
Ne ſi Scoſſa giamai trema la terra,
Quando i vapori in ſen gravida ſerra. *Can. 4. ſt. 4.*

To call the tribes that roam the Stygian ſhores,
The hoarſe Tartarean trump in thunder roars;
Hell through her trembling caverns ſtarts aghaſt,
And Night's black void rebellows to the blaſt:
Far leſs the peal that rends th'ethereal world,
When bolts of vengeance from on high are hurl'd;
Far leſs the ſhock that heaves earth's tottering frame,
When its torn entrails ſpout th'impriſon'd flame.

* Such is Ronſard's affected imitation of the ſong of the ſky-lark:

Words by their ſound may imitate ſound; and quick or ſlow articulation may imitate quick or ſlow motion. Hence, by a proper choice and arrangement of words, the poet may imitate, *Sounds* that are, Sweet with dignity (*a*), —Sweet and tender (*b*), —Loud

Elle quindée du zephire
Sublime en l'air vire et revire,
Et y declique un joli cris,
Qui rit, guérit, et tire l'ire
Des eſprits mieux que je n'écris.

This is as ridiculous as that line of Ennius,

Tum tuba terribili ſonitu taratantara dixit:

Or as the following verſes of Swift;

The man with the kettle-drum enters the gate,
Dub dub a dub dub: the trumpeters follow,
Tantara tantara; while all the boys hollow.

(*a*) No ſooner had th' Almighty ceas'd, than all
The multitude of angels, with a ſhout
Loud as from numbers without number, ſweet
As from bleſt voices uttering joy; heaven rung
With jubilee, and loud hoſannas fill'd
The eternal regions. —— *Par. Loſt, book* 3.

See alſo the night-ſtorm of thunder, lightening, wind, and rain, in Virg. Georg. lib. 1. verſ. 328.—334.

(*b*) Et longum, formoſe, vale, vale, inquit, Iola.
Virg. Ecl. 3.

Formoſam reſonare doces Amarillida ſilvas.
Virg. Ecl. 1.

See

Loud (*c*), — and Harſh (*d*); — and *Motions* that are, Slow in conſequence of dignity (*e*), — Slow in conſequence of difficulty (*f*), — Swift

See alſo the ſimile of the nightingale, Geor. lib. 4. verſ. 511. And ſee that wonderful couplet deſcribing the wailings of the owl, Æneid. IV. 462.

(*c*) ——— vibratus ab æthere fulgor
Cum ſonitu venit, et ruere omnia viſa repente,
Tyrrhenuſque tubæ mugire per æthera clangor;
Suſpiciunt; iterum atque iterum fragor intonat ingens. *Æneid.* 8.

See alſo the ſtorm in the firſt book of the Eneid, and in the fifth of the Odyſſey; — and the ſtanza already quoted from Taſſo.

(*d*) The hoarſe rough verſe ſhould like the torrent roar. *Pope.*

——— On a ſudden open fly,
With impetuous recoil and jarring ſound,
Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harſh thunder. ——— *Par. Loſt*, II. 879.

See alſo Homer's Iliad, lib. 3. verſ. 363. and Clarke's annotation.

(*e*) See an exquiſite example in Gray's Progreſs of Poeſy; the concluſion of the third ſtanza.

(*f*) And when up ten ſteep ſlopes you've drag'd your thighs. *Pope.*

Juſt brought out this, when ſcarce his tongue could ſtir. *Pope.*

——— The huge leviathan
Wallowing unwieldy, enormous in their gait,
Tempeſt the ocean. *Par. Loſt*, VII. 411.

Swift and noiſy (*g*),—Swift and ſmooth (*h*),—Uneven and abrupt (*k*),—Quick and joyous (*m*). An unexpected pauſe in the verſe may alſo imitate a ſudden failure of

See the famous deſcription of Siſyphus rolling the ſtone, Odyſſ. lib. 11. verſ. 592. See Quintil. Inſt. Orat. lib. 9. cap. 4. § 4. compared with Paradiſe Loſt, book 2. verſ. 1022.

(*g*) Quadrupedante putrem ſonitu quatit ungula campum. *Æneid.*

Αὐτὰρ ἐπείτα πεδόνδε κυλίνδετο λάας ἀναιδης. *Odyſſ.* 11.

See alſo Virg. Æneid. lib. 1. verſ. 83.—87.

(*h*) See wild as the winds o'er the deſart he flies. *Pope.*

Ille volat, ſimul arva fuga, ſimul æquora verrens. *Virg.*

Ρηϊδιη τ' επειτα πέλει, χαλεπη περ ἐουσα. *Heſiod.*

(*k*) Πολλα δ' αναντα καταντα παραντα τε δοχμια τ' ηλθον. *Hom.*

The laſs ſhriek'd, ſtarted up, and ſhriek'd again. *Anonym.*

(*m*) Let the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks ſound,
To many a youth, and many a maid,
Dancing in the chequer'd ſhade.
Milton's Allegro.

See alſo Grays Progreſs of Poeſy, Stanza 3.

ſtrength

ſtrength (*n*), or interruption of motion (*o*), or give vivacity to an image or thought, by fixing our attention longer than uſual upon the word that precedes it (*p*). — Moreover, when we deſcribe great bulk, it is natural for us to articulate ſlowly even in common diſcourſe; and therefore a line of poetry that requires a ſlow pronunciation, or ſeems longer than it ſhould be, may be uſed with good effect in deſcribing vaſtneſs of ſize (*q*). — Sweet and ſmooth numbers are

(*n*) Ac velut in ſomnis oculos ubi languida preſſit
Nocte quies, nequicquam avidos extendere curſus
Velle videmur: — et in mediis conatibus ægri
Succidimus. ——— *Æneid.* 12.

See alſo Virg. Georg. lib. 3. verſ. 515. 516.

(*o*) For this, beſure to night thou ſhalt have cramps,
Side-ſtiches that ſhall pen thy breath up. Urchins
Shall exerciſe upon thee. ———
Proſpero to Calyban in *the Tempeſt.*

See Pope's Iliad, XIII. 199.

(*p*) ——— How often from the ſteep
Of echoing hill or thicket have we heard
Celeſtial voices, to the midnight air,
Sole, — or reſponſive to each other's note,
Singing their great Creator? ———
Par. Loſt, b. 4.

And over them triumphant Death his dart
Shook, —— but delay'd to ſtrike. *Id.*

See alſo Hom. Odyſſ. lib. 9. verſ. 290.

(*q*) Thus ſtretch'd out, huge in length, the arch fiend lay. *Par. Loſt.*

Monſtrum

are moſt proper, when the poet paints agreeable objects, or gentle energy (*r*); and harſher ſounds when he ſpeaks of what is ugly, violent, or diſagreeable (*s*). This too is according to the nature of common language; for we generally employ harſher tones

Monſtrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum. *Virg. Æneid.* 3.

Et magnos membrorum artus, magna oſſa, lacertoſque
Exuit, atque ingens media conſiſtit arena.
Æneid. 5. *verſ.* 422.

(*r*) Hic gelidi fontes, hic mollia prata, Lycori,
Hic nemus, hic ipſo tecum conſumerer ævo.
Virg. Ecl. 10.

The dumb ſhall ſing, the lame his crutch forego,
And leap, exulting like the bounding roe.
Pope's Meſſiah.

See Milton's deſcription of the evening, Par. Loſt, book 4. verſ. 598.—609.

Ye gentle gales, beneath my body blow,
And ſoftly lay me on the waves below.
Pope's Sappho.

(*s*) Stridenti ſtipula miſerum diſperdere carmen.
Virg. Ecl. 3.

Immo ego Sardois videar tibi amarior herbis,
Horridior ruſco, projecta vilius alga.
Virg. Ecl. 7.

Neu patriæ validas in viſcera vertite vires.
Virg. Æneid. 6.

See alſo Milton's deſcription of the Lazar-houſe in Paradiſe Loſt, book 11. verſ. 477.—492.

of

of voice to expreſs what we diſlike, and more melodious notes to deſcribe the objects of love, complacency, or admiration. Harſh numbers however ſhould not be frequent in poetry. For in this art, as in muſic, concord and melody ought always to predominate. And we find in fact, that good poets can occaſionally expreſs themſelves ſomewhat harſhly, when the ſubject requires it, and yet preſerve the ſweetneſs and majeſty of poetical diction. — Further, the voice of complaint, pity, love, and all the gentler affections is mild and muſical, and ſhould therefore be imitated in muſical numbers; while deſpair, defiance, revenge, and turbulent emotions in general, aſſume an abrupt and ſonorous cadence. Dignity of deſcription (*t*), ſolemn vows (*u*), and all ſentiments that proceed from a mind elevated with great ideas (*v*), require a correſpondent pomp of language and verſification. — Laſtly: An irregular or uncommon movement in the verſe may ſometimes be of uſe, to make the reader

(*t*) See Virg. Geor. I. 328. and Homer, Virgil, and Milton, *paſſim*. See alſo Dryden's Alexander's Feaſt, and Gray's Odes.

(*u*) See Virg. Æneid. IV. 24.

(*v*) Examples are frequent in the great authors. See Othello's exclamation:

——— O now for ever
Farewell the tranquil mind! &c. *Act.* 3. *ſcene* 3.

conceive

conceive an image in a particular manner. Virgil deſcribing horſes running over rocky heights at full ſpeed, begins the line with two dactyls, to imitate rapidity, and concludes it with eight long ſyllables (*w*); which is a very unuſual meaſure, but ſeems well adapted to the thing expreſſed, namely, to the deſcent of the animal from the hills to the low ground. At any rate, this extraordinary change of the rhythm, may be allowed to bear ſome reſemblance to the animal's change of motion, as it would be felt by a rider, and as we may ſuppoſe it is felt by the animal itſelf.

Other forms of imitative harmony, and many other examples, beſides thoſe referred to in the margin, will readily occur to all who are converſant in the writings of the beſt verſifiers, particularly Homer, Virgil, Milton, Lucretius, Spenſer, Dryden, Shakeſpeare, Pope, and Gray.

I muſt not conclude without remarking, in juſtice to the Greek and Latin poets, that, from our ignorance of the ancient pronunciation, we are but incompetently ſkilled in

(*w*) Saxa per, et ſcopulos, et depreſſas convalles, *Geor.* III. 276. Milton ſeems to have imitated this movement, when he ſays,

——— Eternal wrath
Burnt after them to the bottomleſs pit.

See above, Part. 1. chap. 6. ſect. 1.

their numbers; and that there may be, and probably are, in Homer and Virgil, many imitative harmonies whereof we are not ſenſible at all. The *quantity* of Greek and Latin ſyllables we know well enough; but it is a notorious fact, that in caſes innumerable our pronunciation of them is contrary to what we know to be right. Thus, in reading the following line of Horace,

Aut prodeſſe volunt aut delectare poetæ,

every body pronounces the firſt ſyllable of *volunt* long, and the laſt ſhort; and yet every body knows, that the firſt is ſhort, and the laſt long. All regular hexameters begin with a long ſyllable; yet how often do the beſt readers introduce them with a ſhort one!

When we read this line, by which Virgil meant both to deſcribe and to imitate ſlow motion,

Et ſola in ſicca ſecum ſpatiatur arena *,

we make only five or ſix of the ſyllables long; and yet in this line there are no fewer than ten long ſyllables. Muſt it not then to a Roman ear have appeared more imitative, than it does to ours?

* Georg. i. 389.

In each of thoſe admirable hexameters, ſo deſcriptive of great ſize,

Et magnos membrorum artus, magna oſſa, lacertoſque.
Monſtrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum.

there are eleven long ſyllables according to the ancient pronunciation, and only ſix or ſeven according to the modern. If, then, there be any natural ſuitableneſs in the ſlow rhythm of theſe lines, (and Virgil certainly thought there was), muſt not that have been more obſervable anciently than it is now?

In the Engliſh tongue, the foot Spondeus, conſiſting of two long ſyllables, is not frequent, there being generally one ſhort ſyllable, or more, for each long ſyllable. And as our accented or emphatic ſyllables are all long, and as we give emphaſis to the Greek and Latin ſyllables in the ſame way almoſt as to our own, we ſeldom preſerve in our pronunciation the rhythm of the ancient poetry, and are (I think) moſt apt to loſe it in thoſe verſes that abound in the Spondeus. The Dactyl, of one long and two ſhort ſyllables, is very common in Engliſh; and it ſometimes happens, though not often, that in pronouncing an hexameter of Dactyls we do preſerve the true rhythm tolerably well. Of ſuch an hexameter I take the rhythm to be the ſame with the following:

Multitudes

Multitudes ruſh'd all at once on the plain with a thundering uproar.

And according to this rhythm, nearly, we do in fact pronounce the laſt line of Homer's celebrated deſcription of Siſyphus *. But this line of Virgil, whoſe meaſure and motion are exactly the ſame, the moderns pronounce differently, at leaſt in the firſt three feet :

Quadrupedante putrem ſonitu quatit ungula campum.

Of this other line of Virgil, deſcribing loud ſound,

Suſpiciunt ; iterum atque iterum fragor intonat ingens,

the rhythm is ſtill the ſame, after making the neceſſary *eliſions* ; and if the reader pronounce it ſo, his ear will perhaps inform him, that it is more imitative than he at firſt imagined.

In the beginning of the Eneid, Eolus, at Juno's deſire, ſends out his winds to deſtroy

* Αυταρ ε·	πεπτα πε-	δονδε κυ-	λινδετο	λαας αν·	αιδης.
Multitudes	ruſh'd all at	once on the	plain with a	thundering	uproar.
Quadrupe-	dante pu-	trem ſoni-	tu quatit	ungula	campum.
Suſpici-	unt ite-	r'atqu'ite-	rum fragor	intonat	ingens.

Trojan fleet. Neptune rebukes them for invading his dominions without his leave; and is juſt going to denounce a threatening, or inflict a puniſhment, when he recollects, that it was proper to calm his waters, before he did any thing elſe:

Quos ego—ſed motos præſtat componere fluctus.

The interrupted threat is a dactyl;—the remainder of the line goes off in ſpondees. By this tranſition from a quick to a ſlow rhythm, is it not probable, that the poet intended to imitate the change of Neptune's purpoſe? But this is loſt in our pronunciation, though in the ancient I believe it muſt have been obſervable.——One inſtance more, and I quit the ſubject.

When Dido, that fatal morning on which ſhe put a period to her life, ſaw that Eneas and his Trojans were actually gone, ſhe at firſt broke forth into frantic denunciations of revenge and ruin; but ſoon checks herſelf, as if exhauſted by her paſſion, when ſhe reflects, that her ravings were all in vain. "Unhappy Dido! (ſays ſhe), thy evil deſ-"tiny is now come upon thee*." This

* Infelix Dido! nunc te fata impia tangunt. *Æneid*, iv. 596.——If we read *facta impia*, with the Medicean Manuſcript, the Rhythm is ſtill the ſame, and the ſenſe not materially different: "Unhappy Dido! now are the "conſequences of thy broken vows come upon thee."

change

change of her mind from tempeſt to a momentary calm (for ſhe immediately relapſes into vengeance and diſtraction) is finely imitated in the poet's numbers. The words I have tranſlated form a line of Spondees, whoſe ſlow and ſoft motion is a ſtriking contraſt to the abrupt and ſonorous rapidity of the preceding and following verſes. This beauty, too, is in a great meaſure loſt in our pronunciation; for we only give five or ſix long ſyllables to a line which really contains eleven. —— Are theſe remarks too refined? Thoſe readers will hardly think ſo, who have ſtudied Virgil's verſification; which is artful and appoſite to a degree that was never equalled or attempted by any other poet.

In the courſe of theſe obſervations on the *ſound* of Poetical Language, I am not conſcious of having affirmed any thing which does not admit of proof. Some of the proofs, however, I was obliged to leave out; as they would have led me into long diſquiſitions, relating rather to the peculiarities of Latin and Engliſh verſe, than to the general characters of the Poetic Art. Theſe proofs may poſſibly find a place hereafter in *A Treatiſe of verſification and Engliſh proſody*, which I began ſome years ago, but have not yet finiſhed.

THE END.

AN ESSAY ON LAUGHTER AND LUDICROUS COMPOSITION.

AN

ESSAY

ON

LAUGHTER

AND

LUDICROUS COMPOSITION.

Written in the year 1764.

Ego vero omni de re facetius puto posse ab homine non inurbano, quam de ipsis facetiis, disputari. Cicero.

CHAP. I.

Introduction. The Subject proposed. Opinions of Philosophers, — I. Aristotle — II. Hobbes — III. Hutcheson — IV. Akenside.

OF Man, it is observed by Homer, that he is the most wretched, and, by Addison and others, that he is the merriest animal in the whole creation: and both opinions are plausible,

and both perhaps may be true. If, from the acuteneſs and delicacy of his perceptive powers, from his remembrance of the paſt, and his anticipation of what is to come, from his reſtleſs and creative fancy, and from the various ſenſibilities of his moral nature, Man be expoſed to many evils, both imaginary and real, from which the brutes are exempted, he does alſo from the ſame ſources derive innumerable delights, that are far beyond the reach of every other animal. That our pre-eminence in pleaſure ſhould thus, in ſome degree, be counterbalanced by our pre-eminence in pain, was neceſſary to exerciſe our virtue, and wean our hearts from ſublunary enjoyment; and that beings thus beſet with a multitude of ſorrows ſhould be ſupplied from ſo many quarters with the means of comfort, is ſuitable to that benign economy which characteriſes every operation of nature.

When a brute has gratified thoſe few appetites that miniſter to the ſupport of the ſpecies, and of the individual, he may be ſaid to have attained the ſummit of happineſs, above which a thouſand years of proſperity could not raiſe him a ſingle ſtep. But for Man, her favourite child, Nature has made a more liberal proviſion. He, if he have only guarded againſt the neceſſities of life, and indulged the animal part of his conſtitution, has experienced but little of that felicity whereof he is capable. To ſay nothing

nothing at preſent of his moral and religious gratifications, is he not furniſhed with faculties that fit him for receiving pleaſure from almoſt every part of the viſible univerſe? Even to thoſe perſons, whoſe powers of obſervation are confined within a narrow circle, the exerciſe of the neceſſary arts may open inexhauſtible ſources of amuſement, to alleviate the cares of a ſolitary and laborious life. Men of more enlarged underſtanding, and more cultivated taſte, are ſtill more plentifully ſupplied with the means of innocent delight. For ſuch, either from acquired habit, or from innate propenſity, is the ſoul of man, that there is hardly any thing in art or nature from which we may not derive gratification. What is great, overpowers with pleaſing aſtoniſhment; what is little, may charm by its nicety of proportion, or beauty of colour; what is diverſified, pleaſes by ſupplying a ſeries of novelties; what is uniform, by leading us to reflect on the ſkill diſplayed in the arrangement of its parts; order and connection gratify our ſenſe of propriety; and certain forms of *irregularity* and *unſuitableneſs* raiſe within us that agreeable emotion whereof LAUGHTER is the outward ſign.

RISIBILITY, conſidered as one of the characters that diſtinguiſh man from the inferior animals, and as an inſtrument of harmleſs, and even of profitable recreation, to every age, condition, and capacity, of

human creatures, muſt be allowed to be not unworthy of the philoſopher's notice. Whatever is peculiar to rational nature, muſt be an object of ſome importance to a rational being; and Milton has obſerved, that

Smiles from reaſon flow,
To brute denied : ——

—— Whatever may be employed as a means of diſcountenancing vice, folly, or falſehood, is an object of importance to a moral being; and Horace has remarked,

Ridiculum acri
Fortius et melius magnas plerumque ſecat res *.

Let this apology ſuffice at preſent for my choice of a ſubject. Even this apology might have been ſpared: for nothing is below the attention of philoſophy, which the Author of Nature has been pleaſed to eſtabliſh.

In tracing out the cauſe of Laughter, I mean rather to illuſtrate than to confute the opinions of thoſe who have already written on the ſame ſubject. The inveſtigation has been ſeveral times attempted; nor is the cauſe altogether unknown. Yet, notwithſtanding

* —— Ridicule ſhall frequently prevail,
And cut the knot when graver reaſons fail.
Francis.

former

former diſcoveries, the following Eſſay may perhaps be found to contain ſomething new; to throw light on certain points of criticiſm that have not been much attended to; and even to have ſome merit (if I execute my purpoſe) as a familiar example of philoſophical induction carried on with a ſtrict regard to fact, and without any previous bias in favour of any theory.

To provoke Laughter, is not eſſential either to Wit or to Humour. For though that unexpected diſcovery of reſemblance between ideas ſuppoſed diſſimilar, which is called *Wit*, and that comic exhibition of ſingular characters, ſentiments, and imagery, which is denominated *Humour*, do frequently raiſe laughter, they do not raiſe it always. Addiſon's Poem to Sir Godfrey Kneller, in which the Britiſh kings are likened to heathen gods, is exquiſitely witty, and yet not laughable. Pope's Eſſay on Man abounds in ſerious wit; and examples of ſerious humour are not uncommon in Fielding's Hiſtory of Parſon Adams, and in Addiſon's Account of Sir Roger de Coverly. Wit, when the ſubject is grave, and the alluſion ſublime, raiſes admiration inſtead of laughter: and if the comic ſingularities of a good man appear in circumſtances of real diſtreſs, the imitation of thoſe ſingularities, in the Epic or Dramatic Comedy, will form a ſpecies of humour, which, if it ſhould force a ſmile, will draw forth a tear at the ſame time. An inquiry,

quiry, therefore, into the distinguishing characters of Wit and Humour, has no necessary connection with the present subject. I did, however, once intend to have touched upon them in the conclusion of this Discourse: but Dr Campbell's masterly disquisition concerning that matter, in the first part of his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, makes it improper for me to attempt it. I was favoured with a perusal of that work in manuscript, when I had finished the three first chapters of this Essay for the press; and was agreeably surprised to find my notions, in regard to the cause or object of Laughter, so fully warranted by those of my very learned and ingenious friend. And it may not perhaps be improper to inform the public, that neither did he know of my having undertaken this argument, nor I of his having discussed that subject, till we came mutually to exchange our papers, for the purpose of knowing one another's sentiments in regard to what we had written.

Some authors have treated of Ridicule, without marking the distinction between *Ridiculous* and *Ludicrous* ideas. But I presume the natural order of proceeding in this Inquiry, is to begin with ascertaining the nature of what is *purely Ludicrous*. Things *ludicrous* and things *ridiculous* have this in common, that both excite laughter; but the former excite pure laughter, the latter excite laughter mixed with disapprobation or contempt

contempt *. My design is, to analyse and explain that quality in things or ideas, which makes them provoke *pure Laughter*, and entitles them to the name of *Ludicrous* or *Laughable*.

When certain objects, qualities, or ideas, occur to our senses, memory, or imagination, we smile or laugh at them, and expect that other men should do the same. To smile on certain occasions, is not less *natural*, than to weep at the sight of distress, or cry out when we feel pain.

There are different kinds of Laughter. As a boy, passing by night through a churchyard, sings or whistles in order to conceal his fear even from himself; so there are men, who, by forcing a smile, endeavour sometimes to hide from others, and from themselves too perhaps, their malevolence or envy. Such laughter is unnatural. The sound of it offends the ear; the features distorted by it seem horrible to the eye. A mixture of hypocrisy, malice, and cruel joy, thus displayed on the countenance, is one of the most hateful sights in nature, and transforms the "human face divine" into the visage of a fiend.——Similar to this is the smile of a wicked person pleasing himself with the hope of accomplishing his evil purposes.

* Ridiculus proprie dicitur qui in rebus turpibus ridetur. *Festus.*

Milton

Milton gives a ſtriking picture of it, in that well-known paſſage :

> He ceaſed ; for both ſeem'd highly pleaſed, and Death
> Grin'd horrible a ghaſtly ſmile, to hear
> His famine ſhould be fill'd, and bleſs'd his maw
> Deſtin'd to that good hour. —

But enough of this. Laughter that makes man a fiend or monſter, I have no inclination to analyſe. My inquiries are confined to " that ſpecies of laughter, which is at " once natural and innocent."

Of this there are two ſorts. The laughter occaſioned by tickling or gladneſs is different from that which ariſes on reading the Tale of a Tub. The former may be called *Animal* Laughter : the latter (if it were lawful to adopt a new word, which has become very common of late) I ſhould term *Sentimental*. ——Smiles admit of ſimilar diviſions. Not to mention the ſcornful, the envious, the malevolent ſmile, I would only remark, that of the innocent and agreeable ſmile there are two ſorts. The one proceeds from the riſible emotion, and has a tendency to break out into laughter. The other is the effect of good humour, complacency, and tender affection. This laſt ſort of ſmile renders a countenance amiable in the higheſt degree. Homer aſcribes it to Venus, in an epithet *,

* Φιλομμείδης.

which Dryden and Pope, after Waller, improperly tranſlate *laughter-loving*; an idea that accords better with the character of a romp or hoyden, than with the goddeſs of love and beauty.

Animal laughter admits of various degrees; from the gentle impulſe excited in a child by moderate joy, to that terrifying, and even mortal convulſion, which has been known to accompany an unexpected change of fortune. This paſſion may, as well as joy and ſorrow, be communicated by ſympathy *; and I know not, whether the entertainment we receive from the playful tricks of kittens, and other young animals, may not in part be reſolved into ſomething like a fellow-feeling of their vivacity. —— Animal and Sentimental laughter are frequently blended; but it is eaſy to diſtinguiſh them. The former is often exceſſive; the latter never, unleſs heightened by the other. The latter is always pleaſing, both in itſelf and in its cauſe; the former may be painful in both. But their principal difference is this: — the one always proceeds from a ſentiment or emotion, excited in the mind, in conſequence of certain objects or ideas being preſented to it, of which emotion we may be conſcious even when we ſuppreſs laughter; — the other ariſes, not from any ſentiment, or perception of ludicrous ideas, but from ſome

* Hor. Ar. Poet. verſ. 101.

bodily feeling, or ſudden impulſe, on what is called the animal ſpirits, proceeding, or ſeeming to proceed, from the operation of cauſes purely material. —— The preſent inquiry regards that ſpecies that is here diſtinguiſhed by the name of *Sentimental Laughter*.

The pleaſing emotion *, ariſing from the view of ludicrous ideas, is known to every one by experience, but, being a ſimple feeling, admits not of definition. It is to be diſtinguiſhed from the laughter that generally attends it, as ſorrow is to be diſtinguiſhed from tears; for it is often felt in a high degree by thoſe who are remarkable for gravity of countenance. Swift ſeldom laughed; notwithſtanding his uncommon talents in wit and humour, and the extraordinary delight he ſeems to have had in ſurveying the ridiculous ſide of things. Why this agreeable emotion ſhould be accompanied with laughter as its outward ſign, or ſorrow expreſs itſelf by tears, or fear by trembling and paleneſs, I cannot ultimately explain, otherwiſe than by ſaying, that ſuch is the appointment of the Author of Nature. —— All I mean by this inquiry is, to determine, WHAT IS PECULIAR TO THOSE THINGS WHICH PRO-

* This emotion I ſometimes call the *Riſible Emotion*, and ſometimes the *Ludicrous Sentiment*; terms that may be ſufficiently intelligible, though perhaps they are not according to ſtrict analogy.

VOKE

voke Laughter; — or, rather, which raise in the mind that pleasing sentiment or emotion whereof Laughter is the external sign.

I. Philoſophers have differed in their opinions concerning this matter. Ariſtotle, in the fifth chapter of his Poetics, obſerves of Comedy, that "it imitates thoſe vices or "meanneſſes only which partake of the ri-"diculous: — now the Ridiculous (ſays he) "conſiſts in ſome fault or turpitude not at-"tended with great pain, and not deſtruc-"tive." It is clear, that Ariſtotle here means to characteriſe, not laughable qualities in general, (as ſome have thought), but the objects of Comic Ridicule only; and in this view the definition is juſt, however it may have been overlooked or deſpiſed by Comic writers. Crimes and misfortunes are often in modern plays, and were ſometimes in the ancient, held up as objects of public merriment; but if poets had that reverence for nature which they ought to have, they would not ſhock the common ſenſe of mankind by ſo abſurd a repreſentation. I wiſh our writers of comedy and romance would in this reſpect imitate the delicacy of their anceſtors, the honeſt and brave ſavages of old Germany, of whom the hiſtorian ſays, "Ne-"mo vitia ridet; nec corrumpere et cor-"rumpi ſeculum vocatur *." — The defi-

* Tacitus, de moribus Germanorum, cap. 19.

nion from Aristotle does not, however, suit the general nature of ludicrous ideas; for it will appear by and by, that men laugh at that in which there is neither fault nor turpitude of any kind.

II. The theory of Mr Hobbes would hardly have deserved notice, if Addison had not spoken of it with approbation in the forty-seventh paper of the *Spectator*. "The pas-"sion of laughter (says Mr Hobbes) is no-"thing else, but sudden glory arising from "some sudden conception of some emi-"nency in ourselves by comparison with "the infirmity of others, or with our own "formerly. For men (continues he) laugh "at the follies of themselves past, when they "come suddenly to remembrance, except "they bring with them any present dis-"honour." Addison justly observes, after quoting these words, that "according to "this account, when we hear a man laugh "excessively, instead of saying, that he is "very merry, we ought to tell him, that "he is very proud." It is strange, that the elegant author should be aware of this consequence, and yet admit the theory; for so good a judge of human nature could not be ignorant, that Laughter is not considered as a sign of pride; persons of singular gravity being often suspected of that vice, but great laughers seldom or never. When we see a man attentive to the innocent humours of a merry company, and yet maintain a fix-

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ed solemnity of countenance, is it natural for us to think, that he is the humbleſt, and the only humble perſon, in the circle?

Another writer in the Spectator, N° 249, remarks, in confirmation of this theory, that the weaker part of mankind are much addicted to the paſſion of laughter. Now, how can this be, if the *proudeſt* part of mankind are alſo much addicted to it, unleſs we ſuppoſe vanity and pride to be the ſame thing? But they are certainly different paſſions. The proud man deſpiſes other men, and derives his chief pleaſure from the contemplation of his own importance: the vain man ſtands in need of the applauſe of others, and cannot be happy without it. Pride is apt to be reſerved and ſullen; vanity is often affable, and officiouſly obliging. The proud man is ſo confident of his merit, and thinks it ſo obvious to all the world, that he will ſcarce give himſelf the trouble to inform you of it: the vain man, to raiſe your admiration, ſtruggles not to tell you, not only the whole truth, but even a great deal more. In the ſame perſon theſe two paſſions may, no doubt, be united: but ſome men are too proud to be vain, and ſome vain men are too conſcious of their own weakneſs to be proud. Be all this, however, as it will, we have not as yet made any diſcovery of the cauſe of laughter, in regard to which, I apprehend that the vain are not more incom-

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perate than other people; and I am ſure that the proud are much leſs ſo.

The inſtances brought by Addiſon, in favour of this theory of Mr Hobbes; — of "great men formerly keeping in their retinue a perſon to laugh at, who was by profeſſion a fool; — of Dutchmen being diverted with the ſign of the gaper; — of the mob entertaining themſelves with Jack Puddings, whoſe humour lies in committing blunders; — and of the amuſement that ſome people find in making as many April fools as poſſible *:" — theſe inſtances, I ſay, may prove the truth of the diſtich, quoted by our author from Dennis, who tranſlates it from Boileau,

> Thus one fool lolls his tongue out at another,
> And ſhakes his empty noddle at his brother.

— But I cannot ſee how they ſhould prove, that laughter is owing to pride, or to a ſenſe of our ſuperiority over the ludicrous object. Great men are as merry now when they do not keep profeſſed jeſters, as they were formerly when they did. The gaper may be a common ſign at Amſterdam, as the Saracen's head is in England, without being the ſtanding jeſt of the country, or indeed any jeſt at all. The Jack Pudding is conſidered, even by the mob, as more rogue than fool;

* See Spectator, Numb. 47.

and

and they who attend the ſtage of the itinerant phyſician, do for the moſt part regard both the maſter and the ſervant as perſons of extraordinary abilities. And as to the wag who amuſes himſelf on the firſt of April with telling lies, he muſt be ſhallow indeed, if he hope by ſo doing to acquire any ſuperiority over another man, whom he knows to be wiſer and better than himſelf; for on theſe occaſions, the greatneſs of the joke, and the loudneſs of the laugh, are, if I rightly remember, in exact proportion to the ſagacity of the perſon impoſed on. What our author, in the ſame paper, ſays of Butts in converſation, makes rather againſt his theory than for it. No man, who has any pretenſions to good manners, to common underſtanding, or even to common humanity, will ever think of making a butt of that perſon who has neither ſenſe nor ſpirit to defend himſelf. Sir John Falſtaff would not have excelled ſo much in this character, if he had not equally excelled in warding off and retorting raillery. The truth is, the butt of the company is generally known to be one of the wittieſt and beſt-humoured perſons in it; ſo that the mirth he may diffuſe around him cannot be ſuppoſed to ariſe from his apparent inferiority.

If Laughter aroſe from pride, and that pride from a ſudden conception of ſome preſent eminency in ourſelves, compared with others, or compared with ourſelves as we were

were formerly; it would follow,—that the wife, the beautiful, the ſtrong, the healthy, and the rich, muſt giggle away a great part of their lives, becauſe they would every now and then become ſuddenly ſenſible of their ſuperiority over the fooliſh, the homely, the feeble, the ſickly, and the poor;—that one would never recollect the tranſactions of one's childhood, or the abſurdity of one's dreams, without merriment;—that in the company of our equals we ſhould always be grave;—and that Sir Iſaac Newton muſt have been the greateſt wag of his time.

That the paſſion of laughter, though not properly the effect of pride, does, however, ariſe from a conception of ſome ſmall fault or turpitude, or at leaſt from ſome fancied inferiority, in the ludicrous object, has been aſſerted by ſeveral writers. One would indeed be apt at firſt hearing to reply, that we often ſmile at a witty performance or paſſage,—ſuch as Butler's alluſion to a boiled lobſter, in his picture of the morning *,—when we are ſo far from conceiving any inferiority or turpitude in the author, that we greatly admire his genius, and wiſh ourſelves poſſeſſed of that very turn of fancy which produced the drollery in queſtion.——

* The ſun had long ſince in the lap
Of Thetis taken out his nap,
And, like a lobſter boil'd, the morn
From black to red began to turn.

" But as we may be betrayed into a mo-
" mentary belief, that Garrick is really Abel
" Drugger; ſo, it is ſaid, we may imagine
" a tranſient inferiority, either real or aſ-
" ſumed, even in a perſon whom we ad-
" mire; and that, when we ſmile at Butler's
" alluſion, we for a moment conceive him
" to have aſſumed the character of one who
" was incapable to diſcern the impropriety
" of ſuch an odd union of images.—— We
" ſmile at the logic, wherewith Hudibras
" endeavours to ſolace himſelf, when he is
" ſet in the ſtocks,

As beards, the nearer that they tend
To th' earth, grow ſtill more reverend;
And cannons ſhoot the higher pitches,
The lower you let down their breeches,
I'll make this preſent abject ſtate
Advance me to a greater height.

" Here, it is ſaid, that the laugh ariſes from
" our ſuppoſing the author to aſſume for a
" moment the character of one who, from
" his ignorance of the nature of things, and
" of the rules of analogical reaſoning, does
" not perceive, that the caſe he argues *from*
" is totally unlike the caſe he argues *to*,
" nor, conſequently, that the argument is a
" ſophiſm.—If we ſmile at the aſs, in the
" fable, fawning upon his maſter, in imita-
" tion of the ſpaniel; or at the frog puffing
" and ſwelling to ſtretch himſelf to the ſize

" of the ox, it is (we are told) becauſe we " perceive ſomething ſingularly defective in " the paſſions or ſentiments of thoſe animals. " And a reſpectable friend, who entertains " us with a merry ſtory, is ſaid to do ſo, " either by aſſuming a momentary inferiori- " ty, or by leading our thoughts to ſome " thing in which we ſeem to diſcern ſome " ſmall fault or turpitude." In proof of this, it is further affirmed, " That we ne- " ver ſmile at *fortuitous* combinations of i- " deas, qualities, or events, but at thoſe " combinations only that ſeem to require " the agency of ſome directing mind: — " whence it is inferred, that where-ever the " ludicrous quality appears, a certain mental " character is ſuppoſed to exert itſelf; and " that this character muſt needs imply infe- " riority, becauſe, from our being ſo often " tempted to ſmile by the tricks of buffoons " and brute animals, it would ſeem to be " conſiſtent neither with ſuperiority nor with " equality."

This theory is more ſubtle than ſolid. Let us look back to the analogical argument which Butler puts in the mouth of his hero, and which every perſon who has the feelings of a man muſt allow to be laughable. Why is it ſo? Becauſe (ſay they) it leads us to diſcover ſome turpitude or deficiency in the author's underſtanding. Is this deficiency, then, in the hero Hudibras, or in Butler the poet? Is it real, or is it aſſumed? It matters not which;

which; for, though we knew that an idiot had accidentally written it, or that a wrong-headed enthuſiaſt had ſeriouſly ſpoken it, the reaſoning would ſtill be ludicrous. Is then a trifling argument from analogy a laughable object, whether advanced ſeriouſly or in jeſt? If this be the caſe, it muſt be owned, that the ſentiments of mortal men are ſtrangely perverted in theſe latter times; for that many a volume of elaborate controverſy, inſtead of diſpoſing the gentle reader to ſlumber by its darkneſs and dullneſs, ought to have "ſet the table in a roar" by its vain and ſophiſtical analogies.

Further, I deny not, that all performances in wit and humour are connected with a mind, and lead our thoughts to the performer as naturally as any other effect to its cauſe. But do we not ſometimes laugh at fortuitous combinations, in which, as no mental energy is concerned in producing them, there cannot be either fault or turpitude? Could not one imagine a ſet of people jumbled together by accident, ſo as to preſent a laughable group to thoſe who know their characters? If Pope and Colley Cibber had been ſo ſqueezed by a croud in the play-houſe, as to be compelled to ſit with their heads contiguous, and the arm of one about the neck of the other, expreſſing at the ſame time in their looks a mutual antipathy and reluctance, I believe the ſight would have been entertaining enough, eſpecially if

believed to be accidental.——Our coffee-houſe-politicians were lately betrayed into a ſimile, by one Papirius Curſor, a wag who read the news-papers quite acroſs the page, without minding the ſpace that diſtinguiſhes the columns, and ſo pretended to light upon ſome very amuſing combinations. Theſe were no doubt the contrivance of Papirius himſelf; but, ſuppoſing them to have been accidental, and that the printer had without deſign neglected to ſeparate his columns, I aſk, whether they would have been leſs ridiculous? The joke I ſhall allow to be as wretched as you pleaſe: but we are not now talking of the *delicacies* of wit or humour, (which will be touched upon in the ſequel), but of thoſe combinations of ideas that provoke laughter. And here let me beg of the critic, not to take offence at the familiarity of theſe examples. I ſhall apologize for them afterwards. Meantime he will be pleaſed to conſider, that my ſubject is a familiar one, and the phenomenon I would account for as frequent among clowns and children as among philoſophers.

III. Hutcheſon has given another account of the ludicrous quality. He ſeems to think, that "it is the contraſt or oppoſition of dig-"nity and meanneſs that occaſions laughter." Granting this to be true, (and how far this is true will appear by and by), I would obſerve, in the firſt place, what the ingenious author ſeems to have been aware of, that

that there may be a mixture of meanneſs and dignity, where there is nothing ludicrous. A city, conſidered as a collection of low and lofty houſes, is no laughable object. Nor was that perſonage either ludicrous or ridiculous, whom Pope ſo juſtly characteriſes,

> The greateſt, wiſeſt, meaneſt, of mankind.

——But, ſecondly, caſes might be mentioned, of laughter ariſing from a group of ideas or objects, wherein there is no diſcernible oppoſition of meanneſs and dignity. We are told of the dagger of Hudibras, that

> It could ſcrape trenchers, or chip bread,
> Toaſt cheeſe or bacon, though it were
> To bait a mouſe-trap, 'twould not care;
> 'Twould make clean ſhoes, or in the earth
> Set leeks and onions, and ſo forth.

The humour of the paſſage cannot ariſe from the meanneſs of theſe offices compared with the dignity of the dagger, nor from any oppoſition of meanneſs and dignity in the offices themſelves, they being all equally mean; and muſt therefore be owing to ſome other peculiarity in the deſcription. — We laugh, when a droll mimics the ſolemnity of a grave perſon; here dignity and meanneſs are indeed united: but we laugh alſo (though not ſo heartily perhaps) when he mimics the peculiarities

culiarities of a fellow as insignificant as himself, and displays no opposition of dignity and meanness. — The levities of Sancho Pança opposed to the solemnity of his master, and compared with his own schemes of preferment, form an entertaining contrast: but some of the vagaries of that renowned squire are truly laughable, even when his preferment and his master are out of the question. — We do not perceive any contrast of meanness and dignity in Mistress Quickly, Sir Toby in *Twelfth Night*, the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, or Autolycus in the *Winter's Tale*; yet they are all ludicrous characters: Dr Harrison in Fielding's *Amelia* is never mean, but always respectable; yet their is a dash of humour in him, which often betrays the reader into a smile. — Men laugh at puns; the wisest and wittiest of our species have laughed at them; Queen Elisabeth, Cicero, and Shakespeare, laughed at them; clowns and children laugh at them; and most men, at one time or other, are inclined to do the same: — but in this sort of low wit, is it an opposition of meanness and dignity that entertains us? Is it not rather a mixture of sameness and diversity, — sameness in the sound, and diversity in the signification?

IV. Akenside, in the third book of his excellent Poem, treats of Ridicule at considerable length. He gives a detail of ridiculous characters; ignorant pretenders to learning, — boastful soldiers, and lying travellers, — hypo-

— hypocritical churchmen, — conceited politicians, — old women that talk of their charms and virtue, — ragged philoſophers who rail at riches, — *virtuoſi* intent upon trifles, — romantic lovers, — wits wantonly ſatirical, — fops that out of vanity affect to be diſeaſed and profligate, — daſtards who are aſhamed or afraid without reaſon, — and fools who are ignorant of what they ought to know. Theſe characters may no doubt be ſet in ſuch a light as to move at once our *laughter* and *contempt*, and are therefore truly *ridiculous*, and fit objects of comic ſatire: but the author does not diſtinguiſh between what is *laughable* in them and what is *contemptible*; ſo that we have no reaſon to think, that he meant to ſpecify the qualities peculiar to thoſe things that provoke *pure laughter*. — Having finiſhed the detail of characters, he makes ſome general remarks on the cauſe of ridicule; and explains himſelf more fully in a proſe definition illuſtrated by examples. The definition, or rather deſcription, is in theſe words. "That which "makes objects ridiculous, is ſome ground "of admiration or eſteem connected with "other more general circumſtances compa- "ratively worthleſs or deformed; or it is "ſome circumſtance of turpitude or defor- "mity connected with what is in general "excellent or beautiful: the inconſiſtent "properties exiſting either in the objects "themſelves, or in the apprehenſion of the

"perſon

" perſon to whom they relate; belonging " always to the ſame order or claſs of be- " ing; implying ſentiment and deſign; and " exciting no acute or vehement emotion of " the heart." — Whatever account we make of this definition, which to thoſe who acquieſce in the foregoing reaſonings may perhaps appear not quite ſatisfactory, there is in the poem a paſſage that deſerves particular notice, as it ſeems to contain a more exact account of the ludicrous quality, than is to be found in any of the theories above mentioned. This paſſage will be quoted in the next chapter.

CHAP. II.

Laughter ſeems to ariſe from the view of things incongruous united in the ſame aſſemblage; I. By Juxta-poſition; II. As Cauſe and Effect; III. By Compariſon founded on Similitude; or, IV. United ſo as to exhibit an oppoſition of Meanneſs and Dignity.

HOWEVER imperfect theſe Theories may appear, there is none of them deſtitute

of merit: and indeed the moſt fanciful philoſopher ſeldom frames a theory, without conſulting nature, in ſome of her more obvious appearances. Laughter very frequently ariſes from the view of dignity and meanneſs united in the ſame object; ſometimes, no doubt, from the appearance of aſſumed inferiority *, as well as of ſmall faults and unimportant turpitudes; and ſometimes, perhaps, though rarely, from that ſort of pride, which is deſcribed in the paſſage quoted from Mr Hobbes by Addiſon.

All theſe accounts agree in this, that the cauſe of laughter is ſomething compounded; or ſomething that diſpoſes the mind to form a compariſon, by paſſing from one object or idea to another. That this is in fact the caſe, cannot be proved *a priori*; but this holds in all the examples hitherto given, and will be found to hold in all that are given hereafter. May it not then be laid down as a principle, that "Laughter 'ariſes from the view of two or more ob-'jects or ideas, diſpoſing the mind to form 'a compariſon?" According to the theory

* Pope, Arbuthnot, and Swift, in ſome of their moſt humourous pieces, aſſume the character, and affect the ignorance, of Grubſtreet writers; and from this circumſtance part of the humour of ſuch papers will perhaps be found to ariſe. "Valde hæc ridentur (ſays Cicero) quæ a prudentibus, quaſi per diſſimulationem non intelligendi, ſubabſurde falſeque dicuntur." De Orat. II. 68.

of Hobbes, this compariſon would be between the ludicrous object and ourſelves; according to thoſe writers who miſapply Ariſtotle's definition, it would ſeem to be formed between the ludicrous object and other things or perſons in general; and if we incline to Hucheſon's theory, which is the beſt of the three, we ſhall think that there is a compariſon of the parts of the ludicrous object, firſt with one another, and ſecondly with ideas or things extraneous.

Further: Every appearance that is made up of parts, or that leads the mind of the beholder to form a compariſon, is not ludicrous. The body of a man or woman, of a horſe, a fiſh, or a bird, is not ludicrous, though it conſiſts of many parts; — and it may be compared to many other things without raiſing laughter: but the picture deſcribed in the beginning of the Epiſtle to the Piſoes, with a man's head, a horſe's neck, feathers of different birds, limbs of different beaſts, and the tail of a fiſh, would have been thought ludicrous eighteen hundred years ago, if we believe Horace, and in certain circumſtances would no doubt be ſo at this day. It would ſeem then, that "the "parts of a laughable aſſemblage muſt be in "ſome degree unſuitable and heterogeneous."

Moreover: Any one of the parts of the Horatian monſter, a human head, a horſe's neck, the tail of a fiſh, or the plumage of a fowl, is not ludicrous in itſelf; nor would

would thoſe ſeveral parts be ludicrous, if attended to in ſucceſſion, without any view to their union. For to ſee them diſpoſed on different ſhelves of a muſeum, or even on the ſame ſhelf, no body would laugh, except perhaps the thought of uniting them were to occur to his fancy, or the paſſage of Horace to his memory. It ſeems to follow, "that 'the incongruous parts of a laughable idea 'or object muſt either be combined ſo as to 'form an aſſemblage, or muſt be ſuppoſed 'to be ſo combined."

May we not then conclude, that "Laugh-'ter ariſes from the view of two or more 'inconſiſtent, unſuitable, or incongruous 'parts or circumſtances, conſidered as u-'nited in one complex object or aſſem-'blage, or as acquiring a ſort of mutual re-'lation from the peculiar manner in which 'the mind takes notice of them?" The lines 'from Akenſide, formerly referred to, ſeem 'to point at the ſame doctrine:

Where-e'er the power of Ridicule diſplays
Her quaint-eyed viſage, *ſome incongruous form*,
Some ſtubborn diſſonance of things combined,
Strikes on the quick obſerver.

And, to the ſame purpoſe, the learned and ingenious Dr Gerard, in his *Eſſay on Taſte*: 'The ſenſe of Ridicule is gratified by an 'inconſiſtence and diſſonance of circum-'ſtances in the ſame object, or in objects

" nearly related in the main; or by a ſimili-
" tude or relation unexpected between things
" on the whole oppoſite and unlike."

And therefore, inſtead of ſaying with Hucheſon, that the cauſe or object of laughter is an " oppoſition of dignity and mean-
" neſs;" — I would ſay, in more general terms, that it is, " an oppoſition of ſuit-
" ableneſs and unſuitableneſs, or of rela-
" tion and the want of relation, united, or
" ſuppoſed to be united, in the ſame aſſem-
" blage." — Thus the offices aſcribed to the dagger of Hudibras ſeem quite heterogeneous; but we diſcover a bond of connection among them, when we are told, that the ſame weapon could occaſionally perform them all. — Thus, even in that mimicry, which diſplays no oppoſition of dignity and meanneſs, we perceive the actions of one man joined to the features and body of another; that is, a mixture of unſuitableneſs, or want of relation, ariſing from the difference of perſons, with congruity and ſimilitude, ariſing from the ſameneſs of the actions. — Thus, at firſt view, the dawn of the morning, and a boiled lobſter, ſeem utterly incongruous, unlike, and (as Biondello ſays of Petruchio's ſtirrups) " of no kindred;" but when a change of colour from black to red is ſuggeſted, we recognize a likeneſs, and conſequently a relation, or ground of compariſon.

And here let it be obſerved in general, that,

that, the greater the number of incongruities that are blended in the ſame aſſemblage, the more ludicrous it will probably be. If, as in the laſt example, there be an oppoſition of dignity and meanneſs, as well as of likeneſs and diſſimilitude, the effect of the contraſt will be more powerful, than if only one of theſe oppoſitions had appeared in the ludicrous idea. — The ſublimity of Don Quixote's mind contraſted and connected with his miſerable equipage, forms a very comical exhibition; but when all this is ſtill further connected and contraſted with Sancho Pança, the ridicule is heightened exceedingly. Had the knight of the lions been better mounted and accoutred, he would not have made us ſmile ſo often; becauſe, the hero's mind and circumſtances being more adequately matched, the whole group would have united fewer inconſiſtencies, and reconciled fewer incongruities. No particular in this equipment is without its uſe. The aſs of Sancho and the horſe of his maſter; the knight tall and raw-boned, the ſquire fat and ſhort; the one brave, ſolemn, generous, learned, and courteous, the other not leſs remarkable for cowardice, levity, ſelfiſhneſs, ignorance, and ruſticity; the one abſurdly enamoured of an ideal miſtreſs, the other ridiculouſly fond of his aſs; the one devoted to glory, the other enſlaved to his belly: — it is not eaſy, out of two perſons, to make up a more multifarious contraſt.

Butler

Butler has however combined a ſtill greater variety of uncouth and jarring circumſtances in Ralpho and Hudibras: but the picture, though more elaborate, is leſs natural. Yet this argues no defect of judgement. His deſign was, to make his hero not only ludicrous, but contemptible; and therefore he jumbles together, in his equipage and perſon, a number of mean and diſguſting qualities, pedantry, ignorance, naſtineſs, and extreme deformity. But the knight of La Mancha, though a ludicrous, was never intended for a contemptible perſonage. He often moves our pity, he never forfeits our eſteem; and his adventures and ſentiments are generally intereſting: which could not have been the caſe, if his ſtory had not been natural, and himſelf endowed with great as well as good qualities. To have given him ſuch a ſhape, and ſuch weapons, arguments, boots, and breeches, as Butler has beſtowed on his champion, would have deſtroyed that ſolemnity, which is ſo ſtriking a feature in Don Quixote: and Hudibras, with the manners and perſon of the Spaniſh hero, would not have been that paltry figure, which the Engliſh poet meant to hold up to the laughter and contempt of his countrymen.—Sir Launcelot Greaves is of Don Quixote's kindred, but a different character. Smollet's deſign was, not to expoſe him to ridicule; but rather to recommend him to our pity and admiration. He has therefore given him youth,

youth, ſtrength, and beauty, as well as courage, and dignity of mind, has mounted him on a generous ſteed, and arrayed him in an elegant ſuit of armour. Yet, that the hiſtory might have a comic air, he has been careful to contraſt and connect Sir Launcelot with a ſquire and other aſſociates of very diſſimilar tempers and circumſtances.

What has been ſaid of the cauſe of laughter does not amount to an exact deſcription, far leſs to a logical definition: there being innumerable combinations of congruity and inconſiſtency, of relation and contrariety, of likeneſs and diſſimilitude, which are not ludicrous at all. If we could aſcertain the peculiarities of theſe, we ſhould be able to characteriſe with more accuracy the general nature of ludicrous combination. But before we proceed to this, it would be proper to evince, that of the preſent theory thus much at leaſt is true, that though every incongruous combination is not ludicrous, every ludicrous combination is incongruous.

It is only by a detail of facts or examples, that any theory of this ſort can be either eſtabliſhed or overthrown. By ſuch a detail, the foregoing theories have been, or may be, ſhown to be ill-founded, or not ſufficiently comprehenſive. A ſingle inſtance of a laughable object, which neither unites, nor is ſuppoſed to unite incongruous ideas, would likewiſe ſhow the inſufficiency of the preſent: nor will I undertake to prove, (for indeed I cannot),

cannot), that no such instance can be given. A complete enumeration of ludicrous objects it would be vain to attempt: and therefore we can never hope to ascertain, beyond the possibility of doubt, that common quality which belongs to all ludicrous ideas that are, or have been, or may be imagined. All that can be done in a case of this kind is to prove, by a variety of examples, that the theory now proposed is more comprehensive, and better founded, than any of the foregoing.

Many are the modes of combination by which incongruous qualities may be presented to the eye, or to the fancy, so as to provoke laughter: and of incongruity itself, of as falsehood, the forms may be diversified without end. An *exact arrangement* of ludicrous examples is therefore as unattainable as a *complete enumeration*. Something, however, of this sort we must attempt, to avoid running into confusion.

I. One of the simplest modes of combination, is that which arises from *Contiguity*. Things incongruous are often laughable, when united as parts of a system, or simply *when placed together*. — That dialogue of Erasmus, called *Absurda*, which looks like a conversation between two deaf men, seems to be an attempt to raise laughter, by the mere juxta-position of unconnected sentences. But the attempt is rather unsuccessful; this sort of cross-purposes being too obvious, and too little surprising, to yield entertainment.

1. Ariſtotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, all admit, that bodily ſingularities may be laughable *; and, according to the firſt of theſe authors, that is a ridiculous countenance, in which there is deformity and diſtortion without diſtreſs. Any feature, particularly one of the middle features, a noſe, a mouth, or a chin, uncommonly large, may, when attended with no inconvenience, tempt one to ſmile; as appears from the effect of caricatura in painting. We read in the Spectator †, of a number of men with long chins, whom a wag at Bath invited to dine with him; and are told, that a great deal of mirth paſſed on the occaſion. Here was a collection of incongruities related not only by mutual ſimilitude, but alſo by juxta-poſition; a circumſtance that would naturally heighten the ludicrous effect. Yet here was no mixture of dignity and meanneſs; and the meeting, if it had been accidental, would not have been leſs laughable.

2. A country-dance of men and women, like thoſe exhibited by Hogarth in his *Analyſis of Beauty*, could hardly fail to make a beholder merry, whether he believed their union to be the effect of deſign, or of accident. Moſt of thoſe perſons have incongrui-

* Ariſt. Poet. § 5.; Cicero de Orat. ii. 239.; Quint. Inſt. Or. vi. 3.

† Number 371.

ties of their own, in their ſhape, dreſs, or attitude, and all of them are incongruous in reſpect of one another; thus far the aſſemblage diſplays contrariety or want of relation: and they are all united in the ſame place, and in the ſame dance; and thus far they are mutually related. And if we ſuppoſe the two elegant figures removed, which might be done without leſſening the ridicule, we ſhould not eaſily diſcern any contraſt of dignity and meanneſs in the group that remains.

3. Almoſt the ſame remarks might be made on *The Enraged Muſician*, another piece of the ſame great maſter, of which a witty author quaintly ſays, that it *deafens* one to *look* at it. This extraordinary group forms a very comical mixture of incongruity and relation; — of incongruity, owing to the diſſimilar employments and appearances of the ſeveral perſons, and to the variety and diſſonance of their reſpective noiſes; — and of relation, owing to their being all united in the ſame place, and for the ſame purpoſe, of tormenting the poor fiddler. From the various ſounds co-operating to this one end, the piece becomes more laughable, than if their meeting were conceived to be without any particular deſtination; for the greater the number of relations, as well as of contrarieties, that take place in any ludicrous aſſemblage, the more ludicrous it will generally appear. Yet though this group comprehends

prehends not any mixture of meanneſs and dignity, it would, I think, be allowed to be laughable to a certain degree, merely from the juxta-poſition of the objects, even though it were ſuppoſed to be accidental.

Groups of this ſort, if accurately deſcribed, are no doubt entertaining, when expreſſed in words, as well as when preſented to the eye by means of colour. But it would require many words to do juſtice to ſo great a variety of things and perſons; which therefore could not be apprehended by the mind, but gradually and in ſucceſſion; and hence the jarring coincidencies of the whole would be leſs diſcernible in a poetical deſcription, than in a print or picture. The ludicrous effect, that ariſes from the mere *contiguity* of the objects, may therefore be better exemplified by viſible aſſemblages delineated by the painter, than by ſuch as are conveyed to the mind by verbal deſcription *. Yet even by

* But it does not follow, that Painting is a more copious ſource of Riſible emotion, than thoſe arts are which affect the mind by means of language. Painting is no doubt more lively in deſcription than Poetry: and, by preſenting a whole compoſition to the eye at once, may ſtrike the mind with a more diverſified and more emphatical impulſe. What we ſee, too, we apprehend more eaſily than what we only conceive from narration:

Segnius irritant animos demiſſa per aurem,
Quam quæ ſunt oculis ſubjecta fidelibus, et quæ
Ipſe ſibi tradit ſpectator.

by this vehicle, burleſque combinations may be ſuggeſted to the fancy, which in part derive the ludicrous character from the *juxtapoſition* of the component parts. Take an example or two.

4. "If a man (ſays the *Tatler*, ſpeaking "of the utility of advertiſements) has pains "in his head, colics in his bowels, or ſpots "in his cloaths, he may there meet with "proper cures and remedies. If a man "would recover a wife, or a horſe that is "ſtolen or ſtrayed; if he wants new ſer- "mons, electuaries, or aſſes milk, or any "thing elſe, either for his body or his mind, "this is the place to look for them in *."

5. He ſung of Taffy Welch, and Sawney Scot,
Lillibullero, and the Iriſh trot;
The bower of Roſamond, and Robin Hood,
And how the graſs now grows where Troy town ſtood;

But the deſcriptive powers of painting are ſubject to many limitations. It cannot mark the progreſs of action or thought, becauſe it exhibits the events of one inſtant of time; nor has it any expreſſion for intellectual notions, nor for thoſe calmer affections of the ſoul that produce no viſible change on the body. But Poetry can deſcribe every energy of mind, and phenomenon of matter; and every variety, however minute, of character, ſentiment, and paſſion, as it appears in each period of its progreſs. And innumerable combinations, both of ſublime and of ludicrous ideas there are, which the pencil cannot trace out, but which are eaſily conveyed to the mind by ſpeech or writing.

* Tatler, Numb. 224.

Then

Then he was seiz'd with a religious qualm,
And on a sudden sung the hundredth psalm *.

6. Incongruous ideas, related by contiguity, do sometimes acquire a closer connection, and may become more laughable, when their names being made equally dependent upon one and the same verb, confer on it two or more incongruous significations.

"It is observable, (says Pope of Prince "Eugene), that this general is a great taker "of snuff, as well as of towns †."

An

* Gay's Pastorals. See *Rape of the Lock*, ii. 105. to 110.

† Key to the Lock. —— In all wit of this sort, when laughter is intended, it will perhaps be necessary to blend greatness with littleness, or to form some other glaring contrast. Ovid and Cowley are fond of these quaint conceits, but seldom raise a smile by them, and surely did not intend any.

Consiliis non curribus utere nostris.
Metamorph. lib. 2.

And not my chariot, but my counsel take. *Addison.*

But now the early birds began to call
The morning forth: uprose the Sun and Saul.
Davideis.

"A horse (says a certain serious, but flowery author) "may throw his rider, and at once dash his body against "the stones, and his soul into the other world."

Such witticism in a serious work is offensive to a reader of taste, (see Hurd's Commentary on the Epistle to Augustus,

An oppoſition of dignity and meanneſs, or of greatneſs and littleneſs, is no doubt obſervable in theſe examples. Yet deſcription may ſometimes be laughable, when the ideas or phraſes are related by juxta-poſition only, and imply no perceptible contraſt of dignity and meanneſs. Swift's Inventory of his houſehold-ſtuff, "An oaken broken elbow-"chair," "A caudle-cup without an ear," &c. is truly laughable; at leaſt we are ſure that he thought it ſo: the *various* and *diſſimilar* articles ſpecified in it are *ſimilar* and *uniform* in this one reſpect, that they are all worn out, imperfect, or uſeleſs; but their meanneſs is without any mixture of dignity. —— Sancho's Proverbs often provoke a ſmile; not becauſe ſome are low and others elevated, but becauſe, though *unconnected* both with the ſubject and with one another, they happen to be ſpoken *at the ſame time*, and abſurdly applied to the ſame purpoſe. —— I have heard that mirth may be promoted amongſt idle people by the following expedient. On the top of a page of paper, one of the company writes a line, which he covers with a book; another adds a ſecond, and conceals it in the ſame manner; and thus the paper goes from hand to hand, till it be full,

guſtus, verſ. 97.); — and we are not apt to laugh at that which offends us. To the author it is probably the object of admiration, and we ſeldom laugh at what we greatly admire.

no

no body knowing what the others have written: then the covering is taken off, and the whole read over, as if it were a continued diſcourſe. Here the principal bond of union is juxta-poſition; and yet, though united by this alone, and though accidentally united, the incongruities may be laughable; though no doubt the joke would be heightened, if there ſhould alſo happen to be a mixture of meanneſs and dignity. And the ſame thing will be found to hold true of thoſe muſical contrivances called *medleys*.

7. Even when art is not uſed to diſunite them, human thoughts under no reſtraint are apt to become ridiculouſly wild and incongruous. When his mind unbends itſelf in a reverie, and, without attending to any particular object, permits the ideas to appear and glide away according to the caprice of undirected fancy, the graveſt philoſopher would be ſhy of giving permanence to ſuch a jumble by ſpeech or writing *; leſt by its odd incongruities it ſhould raiſe a laugh at his expence, and ſhow that his thoughts were not quite ſo regular as he wiſhed the world to believe. We need not then wonder, that, when perſons of light minds are made to *think aloud* upon the ſtage, their rhapſodies ſhould prove ſo entertaining. Juliet's *Nurſe*, and *Mrs Quickly*, are characters of this ſort. And we meet with many ſuch

* See the *Spectator*, Numb. 225.

in

in real life; whose sayings are laughable, even when they exhibit no mixture of meanness and dignity, and when mere *juxta-position* is the chief bond of union among their ideas.

II. The mind naturally considers as part of the same assemblage, and joins together in one view, those objects that appear in the relation of *cause and effect*. Hence, when things, in other respects *unrelated* or *incongruous*, are found or supposed to be *thus related*, they sometimes provoke laughter.

1. "Really, Madam, (says Filch in the "*Beggar's opera*), I fear I shall be cut off "in the flower of my youth; so that every "now and then, since I was *pumpt*, I have "thoughts of taking up and going *to sea*." —— It is the cause of this resolution that makes it ludicrous. One sort of water suggests another to the thief's fancy; and the fresh-water pump puts him in mind of a similar implement belonging to ships. There is something unexpected, and incongruous, in the thought, and at the same time an appearance of natural connection.

2. There is a sort of Ironical Reasoning, not easily described, which would seem to derive the ludicrous character from a surprising mixture of Plausibility and Absurdity: and which, on account of the real disagreement, though seeming affinity, of the conclusion considered as the *effect*, with the premisses considered as the *cause*, may not

improperly be referred to this head; though perhaps, from the real *diſſimilitude*, and unexpected appearance of *likeneſs*, in the circumſtances whereon the argument is founded, it might with equal propriety be referred to the following. Several humorous examples of this kind of ſophiſtry may be ſeen in that excellent Engliſh ballad called *The tippling Philoſophers*. Hudibras alſo abounds in it. Such are the lines already quoted, in which he draws comfort from the diſaſter of being ſet in the ſtocks; and ſuch are thoſe well-known paſſages, that prove morality to be a crime, and Honour to lodge in that part of the human body where it is moſt liable to be wounded by a kick*.

3. A cauſe and effect extremely inadequate to each other form a ludicrous combination. We ſmile at the child (in *Quarles's Emblems*) attempting to blow out the ſun with a pair of bellows. Nor is it much leſs ridiculous to ſee heroes, in a tragedy or opera, breathing their laſt in a long-winded ſimilitude, or muſical cadence. The tailor of Laputa, taking meaſure for a ſuit of cloaths with a quadrant; the wiſe men of Lagado carrying vaſt loads of *things* about with them, that they might converſe together without impairing their lungs by the uſe of ſpeech; and ſeveral of the other projects recorded

* See Hudibras, part 2. canto 3. verſ. 1065; and part 3. canto 1. verſ. 1290.

in the ſame admirable ſatire *, are ludicrous in the higheſt degree, from the utter diſproportion of the effect to the cauſe. The ſame remark may be made upon that part of Sir John Enville's complaint, where he ſays, (ſpeaking of his lady), "She dictates to me "in my own buſineſs, ſets me right in point "of trade; and, if I diſagree with her about "any of my ſhips at ſea, wonders that I "will diſpute with her, when I know very "well that her great-grandfather was a "flag-officer †." —— Violent anger occaſioned by ſlight injury makes a man ridiculous; we *deſpiſe* his levity, and *laugh* at his abſurdity. All exceſſive paſſion, when it awakens not ſympathy, is apt to provoke laughter; nor do we heartily ſympathiſe with any malevolent, nor indeed with any violent emotions, till we know their cauſe, or have reaſon to think them well founded. With ſuch as we have no experience of, we rarely ſympathiſe; and the view of them in others, eſpecially when immoderate, gives riſe to merriment. The diſtreſs of the miſer when his hoard is ſtolen, and the tranſport wherewith he receives it back, though the moſt intenſe feelings of which he is capable, are more apt to move our laughter, than our ſorrow or joy: and in the *Aulularia* of Plautus, a great deal of comic ridicule is found-

* Gulliver's voyage to Laputa.

† Spectator, Numb. 299.

ed

ed on this circumſtance. —— Ranting in tragedy is laughable, becauſe we know the cauſe to be inadequate to the effect; and becauſe a diſtorted imitation of nature implies a contraſt of likeneſs and diſſimilitude: but the oppoſite fault of inſipidity, either in acting or in writing, unleſs accompanied with ſomething peculiarly abſurd, is not laughable; becauſe it does not rouſe the attention, and has not that *uncommonneſs*, which (as will be ſhown hereafter) generally belongs to ludicrous combination. This difference in the effects of theatrical impropriety is hinted at by Horace:

——Male ſi mandata loqueris,
Aut *dormitabo*, aut *ridebo* *. ——

—Immoderate fear in another, when there ſeems to be no ſufficient cauſe for it, and when we ourſelves are at eaſe; like that of Sir Hugh Evans, when he is going to fight the French Doctor, is highly ridiculous; both becauſe it is exceſſive, and becauſe it produces a conflict of diſcordant paſſions, and an unconnected effuſion of words †.

4. An

* Ar. Poet. verſ. 105.

† "Pleſs my ſoul! how full of cholers I am, and "trempling of mind! I ſhall be glad if he have de- "ceived me. How melancholies I am? I will knog "his urinals about his knave's coſtard, when I have good

4. An emotion that ought to be important venting itſelf in frivolous language, or inſipid behaviour, would no doubt make us ſmile, if it did not occaſion diſappointment, or ſome other powerful feeling ſubverſive of laughter. When Blackmore, in his Paraphraſes of Holy Writ, ſhows, by the meanneſs of his words and figures, that, inſtead of having an adequate ſenſe of the dignity of the ſubject, his mind was wandering after the moſt paltry conceits; our laughter is prevented by our indignation. Or if ever we are betrayed into a ſmile by ſuch a couplet as the following,

On thee, O Jacob, thy jealous God
Vaſt heaps of heavy miſchief will unload *,

it muſt be in ſome unguarded moment, when, our diſguſt being leſs keen than it ought to be, the ludicrous emotion is permitted to operate.

5. Every body knows, that hyperbole is a ſource of the ſublime; and it is equally true, that amplification is a ſource of humour. But as that which is intrinſically mean can-

" opportunities for the orke. Pleſs my ſoul! *To ſhallow* " *rivers, to whoſe falls Melodious birds ſing madrigals*; " (ſinging) — *To ſhallow* — Mercy on me! I have a " great diſpoſition to cry. *When as I ſate in Pabilon*," &c.
Merry Wives of Windſor, act 3. *ſc.* 1.

* Blackmore's Song of Moſes.

not

not be made great, so neither can real excellence be rendered laughable, by mere amplification. A coxcomb, by exaggerating the charms of a beautiful woman, may make himself ridiculous; but will hardly make them so. But a deformity of feature, that is ludicrous in a low degree, may by exaggeration be made more ludicrous: witness Falstaff's account of Bardolph's fiery-coloured face *. The following is a Grecian conceit; and so highly valued by Strada, that he takes the trouble to explain it in a copious paraphrase.

In vain to wipe his nose old Proclus tries;
That mass his most expansive grasp defies:
Sneezing he says not, "Bless me;" so remote
His nostril from his ear, he hears it not. †

Strobilus,

* First part of King Henry IV. act 3. sc. 3.

† This epigram appears to more advantage in the Greek, on account of the great simplicity of the expression.

Ου δυναται τη χειρι Προκλος την ριν' ἀπομυξασθαι,
Της ρινος γαρ ἐχει την χερα μικροτεραν.
Ουδε λεγει Ζευ σωσον, ἐαν πταρῃ· ὐ γαρ ἀκουει
Της ρινος πολυ γαρ της ἀκοης απεχει.

See Strada. *Pistor Suburranus.* —— Longinus gives this example of a Ludicrous hyperbole.

Ἄγρον ἐσχ' ἐλαττω γῆν ἐχοντ' ἀρ' ἐπισολῆς
Ἀαχωνικῆς, —— *De Subl. sect.* 37.

"He

Strobilus, in the play, ridicules the miſer, by ſaying, "That he ſaved the parings of "his nails, and uſed to exclaim, that he "was undone when he ſaw the ſmoke of his "fire eſcaping through the chimney *." But the moſt profligate wag that ever appeared in modern comedy could not make the moral or intellectual virtues of a good man ridiculous, merely by magnifying them; though, by miſrepreſenting, or by connecting her with ludicrous imagery, he might no doubt raiſe a momentary ſmile at the expence even of Virtue herſelf.

Humorous Amplification will generally be found to imply a mixture of plauſibility and abſurdity, or of likeneſs and diſſimilitude. Butler's hero ſpeaks in very hyperbolical terms of the acute feelings occaſioned by kicking and cudgelling:

Some have been beaten, till they know
What wood the cudgel's of, by the blow;
Some kick'd, until they can feel, whether
A ſhoe be Spaniſh or neat's leather †.

"He was owner of a field not ſo large as a Lacedemo-"nian epiſtle;"—which ſometimes conſiſted of no more than two or three words. Vide Quintil. Orat. Inſt. lib. 8. cap. 3. & 6. Greek and Latin, we ſee, may be quoted on trifling as well as important ſubjects.

* Plaut. Aulul. act 2. ſc. 4.

† Hudibras, part 2. canto 1. verſ. 221.

The

The fact is impoſſible; — hence the *want of relation* between the cauſe and the pretended effect. Yet when we reflect, that the qualities of wood and leather are perceived by ſenſe, and that ſome of them may be perceived by the touch or feeling, there appears ſomething like plauſibility in what is ſaid; — and hence the *ſeeming relation* between the pretended effect and the cauſe. And an additional incongruity preſents itſelf, when we compare the ſeriouſneſs of the ſpeaker with the abſurdity of what is ſpoken. —— When Smollet, in one of his novels, deſcribing violent fear, ſays, "He ſtared like "the gorgon's head, with his mouth wide "open, and each particular hair crawling "and twining like an animated ſerpent," he raiſes the portrait far above nature; but at the ſame time gives it an apparent plauſibility, from the effect which fear is ſuppoſed to have in making the hair ſtand on end. —— It is, I confeſs, an awkward thing, to comment upon theſe and the like paſſages: and I am afraid, the reader may be tempted to ſay of the ludicrous quality in the hands of one who thus analyſes it, that,

> Like following life in creatures we diſſect,
> We loſe it in the moment we detect.

But I hope it will be conſidered, that I have no other way of explaining my ſubject in a ſatisfactory manner. One cannot lay open the

the elementary parts of any animal or vegetable system, without violating its outward beauty.

As hyperboles are very common, being used by all persons on almost all occasions *, it might be supposed, that, by the frequency of this figure, mirth could easily be promoted in conversation, and a character for humour acquired, with little expence of thought, and without any powers of genius. But that would be a mistake. Familiar hyperboles excite neither laughter nor astonishment. All ludicrous and all sublime exaggeration is characterised by an uncommonness of thought or language. And laughable appearances in general, whether exhibited to the senses or to the fancy, will for the most part be found to imply something unexpected, and to produce some degree of surprise.

III. Laughter often arises from the discovery of unexpected *likeness* between objects apparently *dissimilar*: and the greater the apparent dissimilitude, and new-discovered resemblance, the greater will be the surprise attending the discovery, the more striking the opposition of contrariety and relation, and the more lively the risible emotion. All men, and all children, have a tendency to mark resemblances; hence the allegories, similes, and metaphors, so frequent in com-

* See Essay on Poetry, part 2. chap. 1. sect. 3. § 5.

mon discourse: but readily to find out similitudes that are not obvious, and were never found out before, is no ordinary talent. The person possessed of it is called a man of *wit*; especially if at the same time he possess that other talent of conveying his meaning in concise, perspicuous, and natural language. For I agree with Locke, that "Wit consists "chiefly in the assemblage of ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up "pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in "the fancy *:" — And I also agree with Pope, that "an easy delivery, as well as "perfect conception;" — and with Dryden, that "propriety of words as well as of "thought," is necessary to the formation of true wit. Images and comparisons, conveyed in obscure terms, or in too many words, have little effect upon the mind, because they oblige us to take up time in collecting all the parts of the idea; which must lessen our surprise, and abate the vivacity of the consequent emotion: and if the language, instead of being natural, were quaint and elaborate, we should be disgusted, from an opinion, that the whole was the effect of art, rather than the instantaneous effort of a playful imagination.

* Essay on Human Understanding, book 2. chap. 11. § 2.

It is a rule in ſerious writing, that ſimilitudes ſhould be neither too obvious, nor too remote. If too obvious, they offend by their inſignificancy, give a mean opinion of the author's inventive powers, and afford little variety, becauſe they ſuggeſt that only which the reader ſuppoſes himſelf to be already acquainted with. If too remote, they diſtract the reader's attention; and they ſhow, that the author's fancy is wandering from his ſubject, and therefore that he himſelf is not ſuitably affected with it; — a fault which we blame in a ſerious writer, as well as in a public ſpeaker or player. Familiar alluſions, ſuch as every body may make every day, are to be avoided in humorous compoſition alſo; not only becauſe they are inſignificant, yield no variety, and give a mean idea of the author, but likewiſe becauſe they have not incongruity enough to be ludicrous *: — for when we have been long

* Swift's Song of Similes, *My paſſion is as muſtard ſtrong*, &c. will perhaps occur to the reader as an exception. And it is true of that humorous piece, that moſt of the compariſons are not only common, but even proverbial. But then there is, in the way of applying them, a ſpecies of novelty, that ſhows a lively and ſingular turn of fancy in the author, and occaſions an agreeable ſurpriſe to the reader: and the mutual relation, owing to the juxta-poſition, of ſo many diſſonant ideas and incongruous proverbs, cannot fail to heighten greatly the ludicrous effect. Common, or even proverbial, alluſions may ſucceſsfully enough be introduced into burleſque,

long accuſtomed to compare certain things together, or to view them as united in the ſame aſſemblage, the one ſo conſtantly introduces the other into the mind, that we come to look upon them as congenial.—— But in ludicrous writing, compariſons, if the point of reſemblance be clearly expreſſed, and the thing alluded to ſufficiently known, can ſcarce be too remote: for here the author is not ſuppoſed to be in earneſt, and therefore we allow full ſcope to his fancy; and here the more remote the compariſon, the more heterogeneous are the objects compared, and the greater the contraſt of congruity and unſuitableneſs.

Perſons who would paſs for wits are apt affectedly to interlard their ordinary diſcourſe with ſimilitudes; which, however, unleſs they are uncommon, as well as appoſite, will only betray the barrenneſs of the ſpeaker's fancy. Fielding ridicules this ſort of pedantry, in a dialogue between a bad poet and a player. " Plays (ſays the man of rhime) are " like trees, which will not grow without " nouriſhment; but, like muſhrooms, they " ſhoot up ſpontaneouſly, as it were, in a

leſque, when they ſurpriſe by the peculiarity of their application. In this caſe, though familiar in themſelves, they are remote in regard to the ſubject, and apparently incongruous; and may therefore raiſe our opinion of the author's wit: as a clock made with the tools of a blackſmith would evidence uncommon dexterity in the artiſt.

" rich soil. The muses, like vines, may be " pruned, but not with a hatchet. The " town, like a peevish child, knows not what " it desires, and is always best pleased with " a rattle *."

As some comparisons add to the beauty and sublimity of serious composition, so others may heighten the ludicrous effect of wit and humour. In what respects the former differ from the latter, will be seen afterwards. At present I shall only specify the several classes of ludicrous similitudes, and give an example or two in each, with a view to illustrate my theory.

1. One mean object may be compared to another mean object in such a way as to provoke laughter. In this case, as there is no opposition of meanness and dignity, it will be proper, in order to make the combination sufficiently incongruous, that the thing alluded to, if familiar in itself, be remote in regard to the subject, and such as one would not be apt to think of, on such an occasion.

" I do remember him (says Falstaff, speak- " ing of Justice Shallow) at Clement's Inn, " like a man made after supper of a cheese- " paring. When he was naked, he was for " all the world like a forked radish, with a

* See the History of Joseph Andrew's, book 3. chap. 10. The whole dialogue is exquisitely humorous.

" head

" head fantaſtically carved upon it with a " knife *."

He ſnatch'd his whinyard up, that fled
When he was falling off his ſteed,
As rats do from a falling houſe †.

The reader will think, perhaps, that there is even in theſe examples ſomething of greatneſs mixed with meanneſs, as well as in the following:

Inſtead of trumpet and of drum,
Which makes the warrior's ſtomach come,
And whets men's valour ſharp, like beer,
By thunder turn'd to vinegar ‡,

But that mixture is more obſervable, when,

2. Things important, ſerious, or great, are ludicrouſly compared to ſuch as are mean, frivolous, or vulgar. King Arthur, in the tragedy of Tom Thumb, hints at an analogy between two feelings, that were never before thought to have any thing in common.

I feel a ſudden pain within my breaſt,
Nor know I, whether it proceed from love,
Or only the wind-colic. Time muſt ſhow.

* Second part of K. Henry IV. act 3.

† Hudibras. ‡ Ibid.

" Wiſdom

" Wiſdom (ſays Swift) is a fox, who, after " long hunting, will at laſt coſt you the " pains to dig out: it is a cheeſe, which, " by how much the richer, has the thicker, " the homelier, and the coarſer coat, and " whereof, to a judicious palate, the mag- " gots are the beſt: it is a ſack-poſſet, " wherein the deeper you go, you will find " it the ſweeter. Wiſdom is a hen, whoſe " cackling we muſt value and conſider, be- " cauſe it is attended with an egg. But then, " laſtly, Wiſdom is a nut, which, unleſs " you chuſe with judgement, may coſt you " a tooth, and pay you with nothing but " a worm *."

Muſic in general, eſpecially military muſic, is an object of great dignity to the ſerious poet; he deſcribes it with ſublime alluſions, and in the moſt harmonious language. Butler, by a contrary artifice, makes one ſpecies of it ridiculous.

The kettle-drum, whoſe ſullen dub
Sounds — like the hooping of a tub.

3. Things in themſelves ludicrous and mean may become more ludicrous, by being compared to ſuch as are ſerious or great; and that, firſt, when the ſerious object alluded to is mentioned in ſimple terms, without

* Introduction to the Tale of a Tub.

debaſe-

debaſement or exaggeration *; — ſecondly, when it is purpoſely degraded by vulgar language and mean circumſtances †; — and, thirdly, when it is exhibited in all the pomp of numbers and deſcription ‡. Examples of the two firſt caſes are common in *burleſque*; the third is peculiar to the *mock-heroic* ſtyle.

From theſe remarks it will appear, that the riſible emotion may in various ways be raiſed or increaſed by compariſon and ſimilitude. Metaphor, allegory, and the other tropes and figures founded in reſemblance, may in like manner heighten the effect of ludicrous compoſition.

Without multiplying examples, I ſhall only obſerve, of the Allegory in particular, that, provided its deſign be important and obvious, a great diſproportion, in point of dignity, between what it expreſſes and what it ſignifies, will not convey any ludicrous idea to a ſound mind; unleſs where an author is at pains to degrade his allegory, either by the extreme meanneſs of the alluſion, or by connecting it with ſomething laughable in the circumſtances of phraſeology. The fables and parables of ancient times, were not intended to raiſe laughter, but to inſtruct mankind. Accordingly, thoſe Greek apo-

* See Hudibras, part 1. can. 1. verſ. 289.

† See Hudibras, part 2. can. 2. verſ. 595.

‡ See Dunciad, book 2. verſ. 181.

logues,

logues, which are ascribed to Esop, and bear undoubted marks of antiquity, are delivered in the most simple style, and without any effort to draw the reader's attention to ludicrous ideas, except when these make a part of the story *. But some modern fabulists, particularly L'Estrange, are anxious to have their fables considered, not only as instructive allegories, but also as merry tales; and, in order to make them such, frequently employ ludicrous images, and the most familiar diction. Whether this, or the ancient, form of the apologue, deserve the preference, I shall not now inquire. But I could wish, that where the moral was of great importance, and connected with sacred things, we had, in our fables, imitated rather the simplicity of ancient language, than the levity of modern wit. Ridiculous ideas, associated by custom, with religious truths, can have no good effect upon the mind. And in this view, the book called *Scotch Presbyterian eloquence displayed* must ever be held in abhorrence by the friends of reli-

* And when there is any thing laughable in the circumstances, it often appears to greater advantage in the simple Greek, than in the most elaborate modern paraphrase. The reader may compare Αλώπηξ καὶ Κόραξ with *Le Corbeau et le Renard* of Fontaine. The conclusion of the former is remarkably expressive and picturesque, as well as simple: Ὁ δὲ κόραξ ἀκύσας ταῦτα, ἡ χαυνωθεὶς τοῖς ἐπαίνοις, ῥίψας τὸ κρέας, μεγάλως ἐκεκράγει, &c.

gion, even though the writer could be vindicated from the charge of wilful and malicious falſehood. And I cannot but think, that, in this view, even the *Tale of a Tub*, notwithſtanding its unequalled merit as a piece of humorous writing, is blameable, in the general tenor of the allegory, as well as in particular paſſages. —— Are you then one of thoſe gloomy mortals, who think religion an enemy to jocularity? By no means. If I were, I ſhould not now be writing an Eſſay on Laughter. Chriſtianity is, in my opinion, not merely a friend to chearfulneſs, but the only thing in the world which can make a conſiderate mind rationally and permanently chearful. But between ſmiling and ſneering, between complacency and contempt, between innocent mirth and unſeaſonable buffoonery, there ſeems to me to be a very wide difference.

After what Addiſon in the *Spectator*, and Dryden in one of his long prefaces, have ſaid againſt Hudibraſtic rhimes, one can hardly venture to affirm, that a ſmile may ſometimes be occaſioned by thoſe unexpected coincidencies of ſound. I confeſs, however, that I have been entertained with them in Swift and Butler; and ſhould think him a prudiſh critic who could turn up his noſe at the following couplets:

And pulpit, drum eccleſiaſtic
Was beat with fiſt, inſtead of a ſtick. ——

With words far bitterer than wormwood,
That would in Job or Grizel ſtir mood. ——
Though ſtored with deletery medicines,
Which whoſoever took is dead ſince. ——
There was an ancient ſage philoſopher,
Who had read Alexander Roſs over. ——

I grant, that theſe combinations, conſidered as wit, have little or no merit. Yet they ſeem to poſſeſs in a certain degree the ludicrous character, and to derive it from the *diverſity* of the words and meaning as contraſted with the unexpected *ſimilarity* of the ſounds. In ordinary rhimes, the ſound, being expected, gives no ſurpriſe; and, being common, ſeems natural, and a thing of courſe: but when two or three words, in the end of one line, correſpond in ſound to two or three ſyllables of the ſame word, in the end of another, the *jarring coincidence* is more ſtriking and more ſurpriſing. But as they ſurpriſe the more, the leſs they are expected, and the leſs they ſeem to be ſought for, theſe rhimes muſt loſe their effect when too frequent. And the ſame thing muſt happen, when they are incorrect, on account of the imperfect reſemblance, and becauſe every body knows it is an eaſy matter to bring words together that have ſome *letters* only in common: and therefore one is rather offended than entertained with the rhime of this couplet of Prior:

Know

Know then, when Phebus' rays inſpect us,
Firſt, Sir, I read, and then I breakfaſt.

Hudibraſtic rhimes can take place only in burleſque *; ſuch trifling being unſuitable to all ſerious poetry, and even to the affected ſolemnity of the mock-heroic.

Some critics, taking all their notions from the practice of Greece and Rome, have repreſented rhime of every kind as a ridiculous thing. But that cannot be ridiculous, to which we are continually accuſtomed; which, independent on cuſtom, is in itſelf almoſt univerſally pleaſing; and which has acquired additional grace and dignity, by being ſo much uſed as an ornament in our moſt beautiful compoſitions. Similarity of

* Hobbes, partly by a rhime of this kind, and partly by a miſapprehenſion of Homer's language, has turned into groſs burleſque one of the moſt admired deſcriptions in all poetry.

Ἦ, καὶ κυανέῃσιν ἐπ' ὀφρύσι νεῦσε Κρονίων·
Ἀμβρόσιαι δ' ἄρα χαῖται ἐπερρώσαντο ἄνακτος
Κρατος ἀπ' ἀθανατοιο, μεγαν δ' ἐλελίξεν ὀλύμπον, &c.
Iliad. I. 528.

This ſaid, with his black brows he to her *nodded*,
Wherewith diſplayed were his locks divine;
Olympus ſhook at ſtirring of his *godhead*;
And Thetis from it jump'd into the brine.

The tranſlator ſhows alſo his ignorance of the Engliſh tongue, in the uſe he makes of the laſt word of his third line.

ſound in contiguous verſes gives pleaſure to all children and illiterate perſons, and does not naturally offend the ear of any modern European, however learned. Nay we have reaſon to think, that ſomething of this ſort, in the end or beginning* of words, has in all

* A ſimilarity of ſound in the *beginning* of contiguous words, or rather in their initial conſonants, has of late been called *alliteration*. Some authors ſpeak of it in terms of the utmoſt contempt and abhorrence; and as if none but fools and fops could take any pleaſure in it. And ſurely when it recurs often, and ſeems to be the effect of ſtudy, it gives a finical appearance to poetry, and becomes offenſive. But that many good judges of poetical harmony have been pleaſed with it, might be made appear by innumerable examples from Lucretius, Spenſer, Dryden, and others. Indeed, previous to the influence of cuſtom, it would not be eaſy to determine, whether a ſimilarity of ſound, in the beginning, or in the end, of contiguous words, were likely to produce the more rational, or more durable entertainment. That both alliteration and rhime, though not equally perhaps, are however naturally, pleaſing to the ears of our people, is evident, not only from what may be obſerved in children and peaſants, but alſo from the compoſition of many of our old proverbs, in which ſome of the words ſeem to have been choſen for the ſake of the initial letters; as, Many men many minds, Spare to ſpeak and ſpare to ſpeed, Money makes the mare to go, Love me little love me long, Manners make the man, &c.—*Chriſt's kirk on the green*, and moſt of the old Scotch ballads, abound in alliteration. And ſome ancient Engliſh poems are more diſtinguiſhed by this, than by any other poetical contrivance. In the works of Langland, even where no regard is had to rhime, and but little to a rude ſort of Anapeſtic Rhythm, it ſeems to have been

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all ages been agreeable to all nations whatsoever, the Greeks and Romans not excepted. For to what other *ultimate* principle, than the love of similar final sounds, shall we ascribe the frequent coincidence, in termination, of the Greek and Latin participle and adjective, with the substantive? Homer himself often repeats certain harmonious syllables of similar sound; which he might have avoided, and with which, therefore, as he seems on some occasions rather to seek for than to shun them, we may presume that he was pleased *. It is true, the Greeks and Romans did not admit, in their poetry, those similar endings of lines, which we call Rhime. The reason probably was, that in the classical tongues,

a rule, that three words at least of each line should begin with the same letter:

Death came driving after, and all to dust pashed
Kynges and Kayśars, Knightes and Popes.

* Virgil has a few of the same sort,

Cornua velatarum obvertimus antennarum.
Æneid. III.

—— formæ magnorum ululare luporum.
Æneid. VII.

I do not find, that the ancient critics have taken any notice of this peculiarity. Their ὁμοιοτελευτον seems to have been a coincidence of sound rather in the last words of contiguous clauses, than in the last syllables or letters of contiguous words. See Demet. Phaler, § 281.; and Rollin's Quintilian, lib. 9. cap. 3. § 2.

on

on account of their regular ſtructure, like terminations were ſo frequent, that it required more dexterity, and occaſioned a more pleaſing ſuſpenſe to the ear, to keep them ſeparate, than to bring them together. But in the modern tongues the caſe is different; and therefore rhime may in them have a good effect, though in Greek and Latin it muſt have had a bad one. Beſides, one end of rhimes in modern poetry, is to diſtinguiſh it more effectually from proſe: the Greeks and Romans diſtinguiſhed theirs by the meaſure, and by the compoſition, upon which the genius of their languages allowed them to beſtow innumerable graces, in reſpect of arrangement, harmony, and variety, whereof the beſt modern tongues, from the irregularity of their ſtructure, particularly from their want of inflexion, are but moderately ſuſceptible: and therefore, of rhime, as a mark of diſtinction, our poetry may ſometimes ſtand in need, though theirs did not. In fact we find, that Blank verſe, except where the want of rhime is compenſated, as it is in Milton, by the harmony and variety of the compoſition, can never have a good effect in our *heroic* poetry: of which any perſon may be ſatisfied, who looks into Trapp's Virgil, or who, by changing a word in each couplet, takes away the rhime from any part of Pope's Homer. But the ſtructure of the Miltonic numbers is ſo finely diverſified, and ſo tranſcendently harmonious,

nious, that, in the perusal of Paradise Lost, we have no more reason to regret the want of rhime, than, in reading the Essay on Man, or Dryden's Fables, to lament that they were not written in blank verse.

IV. Dignity and Meanness united, or supposed to be united, in the same assemblage, form a copious source of ludicrous combination. Innumerable are the examples that might be given on this head, but I shall confine my remarks to a few of the most obvious.

1. Mean sentiments appearing unexpectedly in a serious argument, so as to form what is called an anticlimax, are often productive of laughter. Waller, in a magnificent encomium on the Summer Islands, provokes a smile instead of admiration, by a contrast of this kind.

> With candid plantanes, and the juicy pine,
> On choicest melons and sweet grapes they dine,
> And — with potatoes fat their wanton swine.

2. Mean sentiments, or expressions, in the mouth of those who assume airs of dignity, have the same effect. Dogberry is a memorable instance. — "Bombard the suburbs "of Pera, (says a mad shoemaker who fancies himself the King of Prussia, in one of "Smollet's novels) — make a desart of Lusatia; — tell my brother Henry to pass "the Elbe with fifty squadrons; — send "hither

" hither my chief engineer; — *I'll lay all* " *the ſhoes in my ſhop*, the breach will be " practicable in four-and-twenty hours." — *Dicta factis exæquanda*, is a maxim in hiſtorical writing; and, in common life, it may be laid down as a rule to thoſe who wiſh to avoid the ridicule of others, that they proportion their behaviour to their accompliſhments.

3. Mean or common thoughts delivered in pompous language, form a laughable incongruity; of which our mock tragedies, and too often our ſerious ones, afford many examples. Upon this principle, the character of Piſtol is ſtill ludicrous, though the race of coxcombs, of whom he is the repreſentative, has been long extinct. The Splendid Shilling of Philips, in which the Miltonic numbers and phraſeology are applied to a trifling ſubject, is an exquiſite ſpecimen of this ſort of ridicule; and no part of it more ſo, than the following lines:

> Not blacker tube, nor of a ſhorter ſize,
> Smokes Cambro-Briton (verſed in pedigree,
> Sprung from Cadwallader and Arthur, kings
> Full famous in romantic tale); when he
> O'er many a craggy hill, and barren cliff,
> Upon a cargo of famed Ceſtrian cheeſe,
> High-overſhadowing rides. ———

4. A ſublime thought, or ſolemn expreſſion, unexpectedly introduced in the midſt of ſomething frivolous, ſeldom fails to pro-

voke a ſmile, unleſs it betray unſeaſonable levity, or want of taſte in the author.

My hair I'd powder in the women's way,
And dreſs, and talk of dreſſing, more than they.
I'll pleaſe the maids of honour, if I can;
Without black velvet breeches—what is man! *

5. An important or violent paſſion, proceeding from a cauſe apparently trifling, is apt (as was remarked already) to excite laughter in the indifferent ſpectator. Here is a two-fold incongruity; a great effect is produced by a ſmall cauſe, and an important paſſion by an unimportant object. Sancho Pança clinging in the dark to the wall of a ruin, with the dreadful apprehenſion that a bottomleſs gulph was beneath him, while his feet were within a few inches of the firm ground, is as laughable an inſtance of diſtreſs as can well be imagined. Sentiments, too, that partake but little of the nature of paſſion, are ſometimes ludicrous, when they ſeem more important than the occaſion requires. As when Parſon Adams, to ſhew that he was not deſtitute of money, produces half a guinea, and ſeriouſly adds, that oſtentation of riches was not his motive for diſplaying it. A finer piece of humour was never written, than Addiſon's Journal

* *The Man of Taſte*, by the Rev. Mr Bramſtone, in Dodſley's Collection.

of the Court of honour in the *Tatler*; in which every reader perceives the oppoſition of dignity and meanneſs: — the latter ariſing from the inſignificance of the cauſes; the former from the ſerious air of the narrative, from the accuracy of detail and minuteneſs of enquiry in the ſeveral examinations, and from the grave deportment of the judge and jury. Indeed, through the whole work, the perſonage of Iſaac Bickerſtaff is ſupported with inimitable pleaſantry. The conjurer, the politician, the man of humour, the critic; the ſerioufneſs of the moraliſt, and the mock dignity of the aſtrologer; the vivacities and the infirmities peculiar to old age, are all ſo blended and contraſted in the cenſor of Great Britain, as to form a character equally complex and natural, equally laughable and reſpectable.

6. To this head may perhaps be referred thoſe paſſages, whereof the humour reſults from an elaborate or minute, and at the ſame time unexpected, illuſtration of what is obvious or frivolous.

" *Grumio.* A fire, good Curtis. — *Curtis.* " Is my maſter and his wife coming, Gru- " mio? — *Gru.* O, aye, Curtis, aye; and " therefore fire, fire. *Caſt on no water* *."

So when two dogs are fighting in the ſtreets,
With a third dog one of the two dogs meets;

* Taming of the Shrew.

With

With angry tooth he bites him to the bone,
And this dog ſmarts for what that dog has done *.

7. Mean circumſtances in ſolemn deſcription, ſeem ridiculous to thoſe who are ſenſible of the incongruity, except where the effect of that incongruity is counteracted by certain cauſes to be ſpecified hereafter. Of this blunder in compoſition the poetry of Blackmore ſupplies thouſands of examples. The lines on Etna, quoted in the treatiſe on the Bathos, are well known. By his contrivance, the mountain is made to labour, not with a ſubterraneous fire and external conflagration, but with a fit of the colic; an idea, that ſeems to have been familiar to him (for we meet with it in other parts of his works); whether from his being ſubject to that diſtemper, or, as a phyſician, particularly ſucceſsful in curing it, I cannot ſay. This poet ſeems to have had no notion of any thing more magnificent, than the uſages of his own time and neighbourhood; which, accordingly, he transfers to the moſt awful ſubjects, and thus degrades into burleſque what he meant to raiſe to ſublimity. He tells us, that when creation was finiſhed, there was a great rejoicing in heaven, with fire-works and illuminations, and that the angels threw blazing meteors from the

* Fielding's Thom Thumb.

battlements *. To the Supreme Being he most indecently ascribes a variety of mechanical operations; and represents him as *giving commissions* to *envoys* and *agents* to take care of the *heavenly interests* in the land of Palestine, and employing *pioneers to make a road* for him and his army. Nay he speaks, of *household troops* and *guards*, by whose attendance the court of the Almighty is both *graced* and *defended* †. Indeed the general tenor of this author's sacred poetry is so enormously absurd, as to move the indignation of a reader of taste, and consequently suppress the laughter, that such incongruity could not fail to raise, if the subject were less interesting ‡.

But here it may be asked, What is the characteristic of Meanness? and what the general nature of those circumstances, sentiments, and allusions, which, by falling below an important subject, have a tendency to become ridiculous? The following brief remarks will suggest a hint or two for answering this question.

First: Nothing natural is mean, unless it convey a disgustful idea. The picture of Ulysses' dog ||, old and blind, and neglected,

* Prince Arthur, p. 50. fourth edition.

† Paraphrases of the Psalms, &c.

‡ See the next chapter.

|| Odyss. lib. 17.

is

is not mean; but the circumstance of his being covered with vermin should have been omitted, because it is both offensive and unnecessary. The description of Evander's fields and cottages, in Virgil*, so far from being mean, is more beautiful and of greater dignity, than that of the sun's palace in Ovid, because more natural, more pleasing, and more instructive. Even the vices and crimes of mankind, the cunning of Iago, the perfidy of Macbeth, the cruelty of Mezentius, the pride of Agamemnon, the fury of Achilles, may, from the ends to which they operate, and from the moral purposes for which the poet introduces them, acquire dignity sufficient to entitle them to a place in serious poetry of the highest order. Natural views of human character in every condition of life, of human passions even in the most uncultivated minds, and of the external world even where destitute of all ornament, may be rendered both useful and agreeable, and may therefore serve to embellish the most sublime performances; provided that indelicacy be kept at a distance, and the language elevated to the pitch of the composition.

But, secondly, in judging of this sort of propriety, respect must be had to the notions and manners of the people to whom the work was originally addressed: for, by a

* Æneid. lib. 8.

change

change of circumſtances, any mode of life, any profeſſion, almoſt any object, may, without loſing its name, forfeit part of its original dignity. Few callings are now held in leſs eſteem, than that of itinerant ballad-ſingers; and yet their predeceſſors the Minſtrels were accounted not only reſpectable but ſacred. — If we take our idea of a ſhepherd from thoſe who keep ſheep in this country, we ſhall have no adequate ſenſe of the propriety of many paſſages in old authors who allude to that character. Shepherds in ancient times were men of great diſtinction. The riches, and conſequently the power, of many political ſocieties, depended then on their flocks and herds; and we learn, from Homer, that the ſons and favourites of kings, and, from Scripture, that the patriarchs, took upon them the employment of ſhepherds. This gave dignity to an office, which in thoſe days it required many virtues and great abilities to execute. Thoſe ſhepherds muſt have been watchful and attentive in providing accommodation for their flocks; and ſtrong and valiant, to defend them from robbers and beaſts of prey, which in regions of great extent and thinly peopled, would be frequently met with. We find, that David's duty as a ſhepherd obliged him to encounter a lion and a bear, which he ſlew with his own hand. In a word, a good ſhepherd was, in thoſe times, a character in the higheſt degree reſpectable both for dignity and virtue.

And

And therefore we need not wonder, that, in holy writ, the moſt ſacred perſons ſhould be compared to good ſhepherds; that kings, in Homer, ſhould be called ſhepherds of the people *; and that Chriſtian miniſters ſhould

* A plain and unaffected literal verſion of Homer, well executed, would be a valuable work. In the peruſal indeed it would not be ſo pleaſing as Pope's Tranſlation; nor could it convey any adequate idea of the harmony of the original: but by preſerving the figures, alluſions, and turns of language, peculiar to the great father of poetry, it would give thoſe who are ignorant of Greek a juſter notion of the manners of his age, and of the ſtyle of his compoſition, than can be learned from any tranſlation of him that has yet appeared. — Something of this kind the world had reaſon to expect from Madame Dacier, but was diſappointed. Homer, as dreſſed out by that Lady, has more of the Frenchman in his appearance, than of the old Grecian. His beard is cloſe-ſhaved, his hair is powdered, and there is even a little *rouge* upon his cheek. To ſpeak more intelligibly, his ſimple and nervous diction is often wire-drawn into a flaſhy and feeble paraphraſe, and his imagery as well as harmony ſometimes annihilated by abbreviation. Nay, to make him the more modiſh, the good lady is at pains to patch up his ſtyle with unneceſſary phraſes and flouriſhes in the French taſte; which have juſt ſuch an effect in a tranſlation of Homer, as a bag-wig and ſnuff-box would have in a picture of Achilles. — The French tongue has a ſimplicity and a ſtyle of figures and phraſes peculiar to itſelf; but is ſo circumſcribed by the mode, that it will hardly admit either the ornaments or the plainneſs of ancient language. *Shepherd of the people* is a favourite expreſſion of Homer's, and is indeed a beautiful periphraſis: it occurs, I think, twelve times in the firſt five books of the Iliad, and in M. Dacier's proſe verſion of thoſe books, only once. — A celebrated French Tranſlator of Demoſthenes makes the orator addreſs

ſhould even now take the name of Paſtors, and ſpeak, of the ſouls committed to their care, under the denomination of a flock.

Is then Homer's poetry chargeable with meanneſs, becauſe it repreſents Achilles preparing ſupper for his gueſts, the princeſs Nauſicaa waſhing the clothes of the family, Eumeus making his own ſhoes, Ulyſſes the wooden frame of his own bed, and the princes of Troy harneſſing their father's chariot? By no means. The poet painted the manners as he ſaw them: and thoſe offices could not in his time be accounted mean, which in his time employed occaſionally perſons of the higheſt rank and merit. Nay in theſe offices there is no intrinſic meanneſs; they are uſeful and neceſſary: and even a modern hero might be in circumſtances, in which he would think it a ſingular piece of good fortune to be able to perform them. Whatever ſerves to make us independent, will always (in the general opinion of mankind) poſſeſs dignity ſufficient to raiſe it far above ridicule, when deſcribed in proper language. In Homer's days, ſociety was more unſettled than it is now; and princes and great men, being obliged to be more ad-

dreſs his countrymen, not with the manly ſimplicity of *Ye men of Athens*, but by the Gothic title of *Gentlemen*: which is as real burleſque, and almoſt as great an anachroniſm, as that paſſage of Prior, where Protegenes's maid invites Apelles to drink tea.

venturous, were ſubject to greater changes of fortune, and as liable to cold, wearineſs, and hunger, as the meaneſt of their people. It was neceſſity that made them acquainted with all the arts of life. Nor was their dignity more affected by the employments above mentioned, than that of a modern prince would be, by riding the great horſe, or putting on his own clothes.

Thirdly: Every ſerious writer or ſpeaker ſuſtains a certain character: — an hiſtorian, that of a man who wiſhes to know the truth of facts, and to record them agreeably; a preacher, that of one who is deeply affected with the truths of religion, and anxious to impreſs them upon others; and an epic poet is to be conſidered as a perſon, contemplating with admiration a ſeries of great events, and employing all the powers of language, harmony, and fiction, to deſcribe them in the moſt intereſting manner. Now by a peculiar kind of ſagacity, either inſtinctive, or derived from experience, all people of taſte know, what thoughts and words and modes of expreſſion are ſuitable to an author's character, and what are otherwiſe. If, when he is ſuppoſed to be taken up with admiration of ſome great object, it ſhould appear, from his language, alluſions, or choice of circumſtances, that his fancy is wandering to things remote from, or diſproportioned to, the thoughts that occupy his mind, we are ſtruck with

the impropriety; as we ſhould be with the unſuitableneſs of that man's behaviour, who, while he kneeled, and repeated a prayer, ſhould at the ſame time employ himſelf in winding up his watch, counting his money, or adjuſting his periwig at a looking-claſs.

In general, that is a *mean* circumſtance, a *mean* alluſion, a *mean* expreſſion, which leſſens or debaſes our idea of what it was intended to embelliſh or magnify. It always brings diſappointment, but not always painful diſappointment: for meanneſs may give riſe to jocularity, as well as to contempt, diſguſt, or indignation.

8. Parodies may be ludicrous, from the oppoſition between *ſimilarity* of phraſe, and *diverſity* of meaning, even though both the original and the imitation be ſerious. The following lines in themſelves contain no laughable matter;

Bread was his only food, his drink the brook,
So ſmall a ſalary did his rector ſend:
He left his laundreſs all he had, a book:
He found in death, 'twas all he wiſh'd, a friend.

Yet one reads them with a ſmile, when one recollects the original;

Large was his bounty, and his ſoul ſincere;
Heaven did a recompenſe as largely ſend:
He gave to Miſery all he had, a tear;
He gain'd from Heaven, 'twas all he wiſh'd, a friend.

But

But in moſt caſes the ridicule of parodies will be greatly heightened, when the original is ſublime or ſerious, and the imitation frivolous or mean. The Lutrin Dunciad, and Rape of the Lock, abound in examples.

Parodies produce their full effect on thoſe only who can trace the imitation to its original. Clariſſa's harangue, in the fifth canto of the laſt-mentioned poem, gives pleaſure to every reader; but to thoſe who recollect that divine ſpeech of Sarpedon *, whereof this is an exact parody, it muſt be entertaining in the higheſt degree.—Hence it is, that writers of the greateſt merit are moſt liable to be parodied: for if the reader perceive not the relation between the copy and its archetype, the humour of the parody is loſt; and this relation he will not perceive, unleſs the original be familiar to him. Much of Lucian's humour lies in his parodies; the phraſeology and compoſition of Demoſthenes in particular he often mimics: and it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that we ſhould be more affected with the humourous writings of the ancients, if we were better acquainted with the authors to whom they occaſionally allude. Certain it is, that Parody was much in uſe among them. Ariſtotle ſpeaks of one Hegemon as the inventor of it †; and juſtly refers parody in wri-

* Iliad, xii. verſ. 310.—328.

† Ariſt. Poet. ſect. 2.

ting, and caricatura in painting, to the ſame ſpecies of imitation, namely, to that in which the original is purpoſely debaſed in the copy. Homer, Virgil, and Horace, have been more frequently parodied than any other authors. Of modern performances, Hamlet's and Cato's ſoliloquies, and Gray's Elegy in a country church-yard, have been diſtinguiſhed in this way. Theſe mock imitations are honourable to the original authors, becauſe tacit acknowledgements of their popularity:—but I cannot applaud thoſe wits who take the ſame freedom with the phraſeology of Scripture, as Dodſley has done in his burleſque chronicle of the kings of England. I do not think that he meant any harm; but it is unwiſe to annex ludicrous ideas to language that ſhould ever be accounted ſacred.

9. The Ludicrous Style may be divided into two ſorts, the *Mock-heroic*, and (taking the word in a ſtrict ſenſe) the *Burleſque*. Of the former the Dunciad is a ſtandard, and Hudibras of the latter. A mixture of dignity and meanneſs is diſcernible in both. In the firſt, mean things are made ludicrous by dignity of language and verſification; and therefore parodies or imitations of the ſtyle and numbers, of ſublime poetry, have a very good effect. Thus Homer's Iliad is the prototype of the *Batrachomyomachia* *, Paradiſe Loſt of the *Splendid Shilling*, and Virgil of

* The Battle of the Frogs and Mice.

the

the Dunciad. Solemnity is the character assumed by the mock-heroic poet; he considers little things as great, and describes them accordingly. — The *burlesque* author is a buffoon by profession. Great things, when he has occasion to introduce them, he considers as little; and degrades them by mean words and colloquial phrases, by allusions to the manners and business of low life, and by a peculiar levity or want of dignity in the construction of his numbers. Ancient facts and customs are sometimes burlesqued by modern phraseology *; as the statue of Cesar or Alexander would be, by a modern dress; — by that dress, which is too familiar to our eye to command respect, and which we see every day worn by men of all characters, both good and bad, both important and insignificant. — Yet the statue of a modern hero in the dress of Alexander or Cesar would not be ludicrous; — partly, because we are accustomed to see the best statues in ancient

* Witness the following description of a Roman Triumph, in Hudib. p. 2. c. 2.

— As the Aldermen of Rome,
Their foes at training overcome,
Well mounted in their best array,
Upon a carre, and who but they!
And followed by a world of tall lads,
That merry ditties troll'd and ballads,
Did ride with many a good morrow,
Crying, Hey for our town, through the borough.

dresses;

dreſſes; partly, becauſe thoſe dreſſes have more intrinſic beauty than the modern; partly, becauſe we have never ſeen them applied to any purpoſe but that of adorning the images of great men; and partly, no doubt, becauſe what bears the ſtamp of antiquity does naturally command veneration.

In accoutering ancient heroes for the modern ſtage, it were to be wiſhed, that ſome regard were had to *Coſtume* and probability. Cato's wig is famous. We have ſeen Macbeth dreſſed in ſcarlet and gold, with a full-bottom'd periwig, which, on his uſurping the ſovereignty, was forthwith decorated with two additional tails. Nothing could guard ſuch incongruity from the ridicule of thoſe who know any thing of ancient manners, but either the tranſcendent merit of the actor and of the play, or the force of habit, which, as will appear by and by, has a powerful influence in ſuppreſſing riſible emotions.—But is it not as abſurd to make Cato and Macbeth ſpeak Engliſh, as to dreſs them in periwigs? No: the former practice is juſtified upon the plea of neceſſity; but it can never be neceſſary to equip an ancient hero with a modern ornament which in itſelf is neither natural nor graceful. I admit, that the exact Roman dreſs would not ſuit the Britiſh ſtage: but might not ſomething be contrived in its ſtead, which would gratify the unlearned part of the audience, without offending the reſt? If ſuch a reformation

formation ſhall ever be attempted, I hope care will be taken to avoid the error of thoſe painters, who, by joining in one piece the faſhions of different centuries, incur the charge of anachroniſm, and exhibit ſuch figures on their canvas, as never appeared upon earth. I have in my eye a portrait, in other reſpects of great merit, of the late Mariſchal Keith; who appears habited in a ſuit of old Gothic armour, with ruffles of the preſent faſhion at his wriſts, a bag-wig on his head, and a muſket in his hand. Alexander the Great, in a hat and feather, wielding a tomahawk, or ſnapping a piſtol at the head of Clytus, would ſcarce be a greater impropriety. — But to return:

Theſe two ſtyles of writing, the *Mock-heroic* and the *Burleſque*, are not eſſential either to wit or to humour. A performance may be truly laughable, in which the *language* is perfectly ſerious and *adequate*. And as the pathos that reſults from incident is more powerful than what ariſes merely from vehemence of expreſſion, ſo an humorous tale, delivered with a grave look and ſerious phraſeology, like Pope's "Narrative of the "phrenzy of John Dennis," or Arbuthnot's "Account of what paſſed in London on oc-"caſion of Whiſton's prophecy," may be more ludicrous than either the Burleſque or Mock-heroic ſtyle could have made it. That a grave face heightens the effect of a merry ſtory, has indeed been often obſerved; and,

if

if we ſuppoſe laughter to ariſe from an unexpected coincidence of relation and contrariety, is eaſily accounted for.

10. Mean ſentiments, or unimportant phraſes, delivered in heroic verſe, are ſometimes laughable, from the ſolemnity of the meaſure, and the oppoſite nature of the language and ſubject. Gay thought the following couplet ludicrous:

> This is the ancient hand and eke the pen,
> Here is for horſes hay, and meat for men.

But this, if continued, would loſe its effect, by raiſing diſguſt, an emotion of greater authority than laughter. Nothing is leſs laughable than a dull poem; but flaſhes of extreme abſurdity may give an agreeable impulſe to the ſpirits of the reader. Extreme abſurdity is particularly entertaining in a ſhort performance, where the author ſeriouſly meant to do his beſt; as in epitaphs and love-letters written by illiterate perſons. Here, if there is no apparent oppoſition of dignity and meanneſs, there may be other kinds of riſible incongruity;—a vaſt diſproportion between the intention and execution, between the ſeriouſneſs of the author and the inſignificance of his work; beſides the many odd contraſts in the work itſelf,—of mean phraſes and ſentiments aſpiring to importance, of ſounding words with little ſignification, of inconſiſtent or unrelated expreſſions,

preſſions placed contiguouſly, of ſentences that ſeem to promiſe much but end in nothing; not to mention thoſe blunders in writing, and ſoleciſms in language, that ſometimes give a ludicrous air to what had a very ſolemn deſtination.

Modern language, adapted to thoſe meaſures of poetry that are peculiar to Greek and Latin, will likewiſe appear ridiculous to ſuch as are acquainted with the claſſic authors; on account of the unuſual contraſt of modern words and ancient rhythm. Hence the ludicrous awkwardneſs of an Engliſh hexameter. It looks as if a man were to walk the ſtreet, or come into a room, with the pace of a trotting horſe. Between the movement, and that which moves, there is a manifeſt incongruity. Sir Philip Sidney attempted to introduce the hexameter into the Engliſh tongue, and has exemplified it in his *Arcadia*; but it ſuits not the genius of the language, and has never been adopted by any perſon who underſtood the true principles of Engliſh numbers.——Wallis, finding that the firſt verſe of the common proſe verſion of the ſecond pſalm was by accident an hexameter, has reduced the whole into that meaſure; but the ſound is extremely uncouth. And Watts's Engliſh Sapphic ode on the Laſt Day, notwithſtanding the awful ſubject, has ſomething in the cadence that almoſt provokes a ſmile.

There is a poem well known in North

Britain, which to a Scotchman who underſtands Latin is abundantly entertaining. It was written in the beginning of the laſt century, by the famous Drummond of Hawthornden. The meaſure is hexameter, the numbers Virgilian, and the language Latin mixed with Broad Scotch. Nothing can be more ludicrous than ſuch a jumble. It is dignity and meanneſs in the extreme; — dignity of ſound, and meanneſs of words and ideas. I ſhall not give a ſpecimen; as the humour is local, and rather coarſe, and the images, though ſtrong, not quite delicate.

11. On ſome of the principles above mentioned, one might explain the ludicrous character of a certain claſs of abſurdities to be met with in very reſpectable authors, and proceeding from a ſuperabundance of wit, and the affectation of extraordinary refinement. It is not uncommon to ſay, of a perſon who is old, or has long been in danger from a diſeaſe ſuppoſed mortal, that "he "has one foot in the grave and the other "following." A certain author, ſpeaking of a pious old woman, is willing to adopt this proverbial amplification, but by his efforts to improve it, preſents a very laughable idea to his reader, when he ſays, "that ſhe had one foot in the grave, and "the other — among the ſtars." —— The following verſes (ſpoken by Cortez on his arrival in America) were once no doubt thought very fine; but the reader who attends to the imagery

imagery will perceive that they are very abſurd, and ſomewhat ridiculous:

> On what new happy climate are we thrown,
> So long kept ſecret, and ſo lately known?
> As if our old world modeſtly withdrew,
> And here in private had brought forth a new *.

Here, beſides the jumble of incongruous ideas, there is on the part of the author a violent and ſolemn effort ending in a frivolous performance.

The pedantic ſolemnity of the elder gravedigger, in *Hamlet*, makes the abſurdity of what he ſays doubly entertaining; and the ridicule is yet further heightened by the ſerioufneſs of his companion, who liſtens to his nonſenſe, and thinks himſelf inſtructed by it. "For here lies the point, (ſays the "Clown), if I drown myſelf wittingly, it "argues an act; and an act hath three "branches; it is to act, to do, and to per-"form. Argal, ſhe drowned herſelf wit-"tingly.——*Other Clown.* Nay, but hear "you, Goodman Delver.——*Clown.* Give "me leave. Here lies the water, good; "here ſtands the man, good: if the man "go to this water, and drown himſelf, it "is, will he, nill he, he goes; mark you "that. But if the water come to him, and "drown him, he drowns not himſelf. Ar-

* Dryden's Indian Emperor.

" gal, he that is not guilty of his own death, " ſhortens not his own life. ——*Other Clown.* " But is this law? ——*Clown.* Aye, marry " is it: crowner's queſt law."

Cicero and Quintilian both obſerve, that an abſurd anſwer, whether caſual or intentional, may give riſe to laughter *; a remark which Eraſmus had in view, perhaps, when he wrote his dialogue called *Abſurda.* In this caſe, the mere juxtapoſition of unſuitable ideas may, as already hinted, form the ludicrous quality. But if laughter is ever raiſed by a pertinent anſwer proceeding from the mouth of one from whom nothing but abſurdity was expected, it would ſeem to be in part occaſioned by the ſurpriſing diſproportion of the cauſe to the effect, of the intellectual weakneſs of the ſpeaker to the propriety of what is ſpoken. "How ſhameful is it " that you ſhould fall aſleep? (ſaid a dull " preacher to his drowſy audience); what, " that poor creature (pointing to an idiot " who was leaning on a ſtaff and ſtaring at " him) is both awake and attentive! Per- " haps, Sir, replied the fool, I ſhould have " been aſleep too, if I had not been an i- " diot."

Whatever reſtraint good-breeding or good-nature may impoſe upon his company, the imperfect attempts of a foreigner to ſpeak a

* Cic. de Orat. lib. 2. § 68.; Quint. Inſt. Orat. lib. 6. cap. 3.

language

language he is not maſter of, muſt be allowed to be ſomewhat ludicrous; for they are openly laughed at by children and clowns; and Shakeſpeare and Moliere have not diſdained to make them the objects of comic ridicule. Nor would Ariſtotle, if we may judge from his definition of Comic Ridicule, have blamed them for it. In the perſon who ſpeaks with the intelligence and figure of a man, and the incapacity of a child, there is ſomething like an oppoſition of dignity and meanneſs, as well as of ſimilarity and diſſimilitude, in what he ſays compared with what he ſhould ſay: there is too a diſproportion between the performance and the effort; and there may be blunders that pervert the meaning. —— Thoſe ſoleciſms, vulgarly called *Bulls*, are of different characters, and cannot perhaps be referred to any one claſs of laughable abſurdity. If, as often happens, they diſguiſe real nonſenſe with an appearance of ſenſe, and proceed from apparent ſerioufneſs though real want of conſideration in the ſpeaker, their ludicrous nature may be explained on the principles already ſpecified.

12. In language, there are three ſorts of phraſeology. —— 1. Some words and phraſes, being always neceſſary, are uſed by people of all conditions, and find a place in every ſort of writing. Theſe form the bulk of every language; and cannot be ſaid to poſſeſs in themſelves either meanneſs or dignity. In the

the ſublimeſt compoſitions they are not ungraceful; in works of humour, and in familiar diſcourſe, they may be employed with propriety; and, from the univerſality of their application, they have the advantage of being underſtood by all who ſpeak the language to which they belong. —— 2. Other expreſſions have a peculiar dignity, becauſe found only in the more elevated compoſitions, or ſpoken only by perſons of learning and diſtinction, and on the more ſolemn occaſions of life. Such are the words and phraſes peculiar to ſcripture and religion; ſuch are thoſe that in all polite languages conſtitute what is called the poetical dialect *; and ſuch are moſt words of foreign original, which, though naturalized, are not in familiar uſe. —— 3. There are alſo certain phraſes and words, which may properly enough be called *mean*; becauſe uſed chiefly by perſons of no learning or breeding, or by others on familiar occaſions only †, or in order to expreſs

* See Eſſay on Poetry, part 2. chap. 1. ſect. 2.

† Caſtalio's Tranſlation of the Old Teſtament does great honour to his learning, but not to his taſte. The quaintneſs of his Latin ſtyle betrays a deplorable inattention to the ſimple majeſty of his original. In the Song of Solomon he is particularly injudicious; debaſing the magnificence of the language and ſubject by *Diminutives*, which, tho' expreſſive of *familiar endearment*, he ſhould have known to be deſtitute of dignity, and therefore improper on ſolemn occaſions. This incongruous mixture, of

preſs what is trifling or contemptible. Such are trite proverbs; colloquial oaths, and forms of compliment; the ungrammatical phraſes of converſation; the dialect peculiar to certain trades; the jargon of beggars, thieves, gamblers, and fops; foreign and provincial barbariſms, and the like. Theſe, if intelligible, may be introduced in *burleſque* writing with good effect, as in *Hudibras* and the *Hiſtory of John Bull;* but ought never to find a place in ſerious writing; nor even in the *Mock-heroic*, except perhaps in a ſhort characteriſtical ſpeech, like that of Sir Plume in the *Rape of the Lock* *; nor indeed in any literary work where elegance is expected. This *Cant* ſtyle, as it is ſometimes called, was very prevalent in England in the latter part of the laſt century; having been brought in by the courtiers of Charles the Second, who, to ſhow their contempt for the ſolemn character that had diſtinguiſhed the preceding period, ran into the oppoſite extreme,

of ſublime ideas and words comparatively mean, has a very bad effect, and degrades the nobleſt poetry almoſt to the level of burleſque. "Mea columbula, offende mihi "tuum vulticulum; fac ut audiam tuam voculam; nam "et voculam venuſtulam, et vulticulum habes lepidulum. "—Cerviculam habes Davidicæ turris ſimilem.—Cer-"vicula quaſi eburnea turricula.—Utinam eſſes mihi "quaſi fraterculus, qui meæ mammas materculæ ſuxiſſes. "—Venio in meos hortulos, ſororcula mea ſponſa.—"Ego dormio, vigilante meo corculo," &c.

* See canto 4. verſ. 127.

and

and affected profligacy of manners, profaneneſs of talk, and a looſe ungrammatical vulgarity of expreſſion. L'Eſtrange is full of it, not only in his Fables, where burleſque may be pardonable, but even in his Tranſlations of Joſephus and Tacitus *. Eachard, by a ſimilar indiſcretion, has transformed the elegant Terence into a writer of farce and buffoonery. Nay, Dryden himſelf, in one or two inſtances, and perhaps in more, has burleſqued both Homer and Virgil, by interlarding his Tranſlations with this beggarly dialect †. And ſome imprudent divines

* He makes the grave and ſublime Tacitus ſpeak of ſome gentlemen, "who had *feathered their neſts* in the "civil war between Ceſar and Pompey;" and tells us, that the Emperor Vitellius was *lugged out of his hole* by thoſe who came to kill him.

† So heavy a charge againſt ſo great an author ought not to be advanced without proof. —— In Dryden's verſion of the firſt book of the Iliad, Jupiter addreſſes Juno in theſe words:

> My *houſehold curſe*, my *lawful plague*, the ſpy
> Of Jove's deſigns, his *other ſquinting eye*.

Homer, in the ſame book, ſays, "The Gods were "troubled in the palace of Jove, when Vulcan, the re-"nowned artificer, began to addreſs them in theſe words, "with a view to ſooth his beloved mother, the white-"arm'd Juno:"—which Dryden thus verſifies:

> The *limping ſmith* obſerved the ſadden'd feaſt,
> And *hopping here and there*, *himſelf a jeſt*,

vines have employed it, where it is moſt pernicious, and abſolutely intolerable, even in religion itſelf.

Rutherford's

Put in his word, that neither might offend,
To Jove obſequious, yet his mother's friend.

Homer has been blamed, not without reaſon, for degrading his Gods into mortals; but Dryden has degraded them into blackguards. He concludes the book in a ſtrain of buffoonery as groſs as any thing in Hudibras:

Drunken at laſt, and drowſy, they depart
Each to his houſe, adorn'd with labour'd art
Of the lame architect. The thundering God,
Even he withdrew to reſt, and *had his load;*
His *ſweeming head* to *needful* ſleep *apply'd*,
And Juno *lay unheeded* by his ſide.

The paſſage literally rendered is no more than this. "Now, when the ſhining light of the ſun was gone "down, the other gods being inclined to ſlumber, de- "parted to their ſeveral homes, to where Vulcan, the "lame deity, renowned for ingenious contrivance, had "built for each a palace. And Olympian Jove, the "thunderer, went to the bed where, when ſweet ſleep "came upon him, he was accuſtomed to repoſe. Thi- "ther aſcending, he reſigned himſelf to reſt; and near "him Juno, diſtinguiſhed by the golden throne." —— It is ſaid, that Dryden once intended to tranſlate the whole Iliad. Taking this firſt book for a ſpecimen, I am glad, both on Homer's account and on his own, that he did not. It is tainted throughout with a daſh of burleſque, (owing not only to his choice of words, but alſo to his paraphraſes and additions), and with ſo much of the profane cant of his age, that if we were to judge of the poet by the tranſlator, we ſhould imagine the Iliad to have been partly deſigned for a ſatire upon the clergy.

Rutherford's Letters, well known in North Britain, are notorious in this way; not ſo much for the rudeneſs of the ſtyle in general, for that might be pardoned in a Scotch writer who lived one hundred and twenty years ago, as for the alluſions and figures, which are inexcuſeably groſs and groveling. A reader who is unacquainted with the character of Rutherford might imagine, that thoſe letters muſt have been written with a view to ridicule every thing that is ſacred. And though there is reaſon to believe the author had no bad meaning, one cannot without horror ſee religion profaned by a phraſeology which one would ſooner expect

Virgil, in his ninth Eclogue, puts theſe words in the mouth of an unfortunate ſhepherd.

O Lycida, vivi pervenimus, advena noſtri,
Quod nunquam veriti ſumus, ut poſſeſſor agelli
Diceret, Hæc mea ſunt, veteres migrate coloni.
Nunc victi, triſtes, quoniam fors omnia verſat,
Hos illi (quod nec bene vertat!) mittimus hædos.

It is ſtrange that Dryden did not perceive the beautiful ſimplicity of theſe lines. If he had, he would not have written the following ridiculous tranſlation.

——— O Lycidas, at laſt
The time is come I never thought to ſee,
(Strange revolution for my farm and me),
When the *grim captain* in a ſurly tone
Cries out, *Pack up, ye raſcals, and be gone.*
Kick'd out, we ſet the beſt face on't we could,
And theſe two kids, t'appeaſe his angry mood,
I bear; of which *the furies give him good.*

from

from a profligate clown in an alehouſe, than from a clergyman. Such performances are very detrimental to true piety; they pervert the ignorant, and encourage the profaneneſs of the ſcoffer. Nor let it be ſaid, that they make religious truth intelligible to the vulgar: rather ſay, that they tend to make it appear contemptible. Indeed a preacher, who affects a diſplay of metaphyſical learning, or interlards his compoſition with terms of art or ſcience, or with uncommon words derived from the Greek and Latin, muſt be little underſtood by unlettered hearers: but that is a fault which every preacher who has the inſtruction of his people at heart, and is maſter of his language and ſubject, will carefully and eaſily avoid. For between plainneſs and meanneſs of expreſſion there is a very wide difference. Plain words are univerſally underſtood, and may be uſed in every argument, and are eſpecially requiſite in all writings addreſſed to the people. Mean language has no ſtandard, is different in different places, and is applicable to burleſque arguments only. Gulliver's Travels, or the Drapers Letters, are intelligible in every part of England; but the dialects of Yorkſhire, Lancaſhire, and Somerſetſhire, are hardly underſtood beyond the limits of theſe provinces. A ſermon in Broad Scotch would now ſeem ridiculous to a Scotch peaſant, and withal be leſs intelligible than one of Swift's or Atterbury's.

Few things in language have a more debaſing influence than provincial barbariſms; becauſe we ſeldom hear them, except from illiterate people, and on familiar occaſions *. Hence, upon the principles here laid down, it might be preſumed *a priori*, that to thoſe who thoroughly underſtand them, they would be apt to appear ludicrous; eſpecially when either the ſubject, or the condition of the ſpeaker, gave ground to expect a more polite ſtyle. And this is ſo much the caſe, that in North Britain it is no uncommon thing to ſee a man obtain a character for joculariety, merely by ſpeaking the vulgar broad Scotch. To write in that tongue, and yet

* There is an obvious difference between dialect and pronunciation. A man may be both learned and well-bred, and yet never get the better of his national accent. This may make his ſpeech ungraceful, but will not render it ridiculous. It becomes ridiculous only when it is debaſed by thoſe vulgarities that convey a mean idea of the ſpeaker. Every Scotchman of taſte is ambitious to avoid the ſoleciſms of his native dialect. And this by care and ſtudy he may do, and be able, even in familiar diſcourſe, to command ſuch a phraſeology as, if committed to writing, would be allowed to be pure Engliſh. He may too ſo far diveſt himſelf of his national accent as to be perfectly intelligible, wherever the Engliſh language is underſtood. But the niceties of Engliſh pronunciation he cannot acquire, without an early and long reſidence among Engliſh people who ſpeak well. It is however to be hoped, that in the next century this will not be ſo difficult. From the attention that has of late been paid to the ſtudy of the Engliſh tongue, the Scots have greatly improved both their pronunciation and their ſtyle within theſe laſt thirty years.

write

write ſeriouſly, is now impoſſible; ſuch is the effect of *mean* expreſſions applied to an *important* ſubject: ſo that if a Scotch merchant, or man of buſineſs, were to write to his countryman in his native dialect, the other would conclude that he was in jeſt. Not that this language is *naturally* more ridiculous than others. While ſpoken and written at the court of Scotland, and by the moſt polite perſons in the kingdom, it had all the dignity that any other tongue, equally ſcanty and uncultivated, could poſſeſs; and was a dialect of Engliſh, as the Dutch is of German, or the Portugueſe of Spaniſh; that is, it was a language derived from and like another, but ſubject to its own laws, and regulated by the practice of thoſe who writ and ſpoke it. But, for more than half a century paſt, it has, even by the Scots themſelves, been conſidered as the dialect of the vulgar; the learned and polite having, for the moſt part, adopted the Engliſh in its ſtead; — a preference juſtly due to the ſuperior genius of that noble language, and the natural effect of the preſent civil conſtitution of Great Britain. And now, in Scotland, there is no ſuch thing as a ſtandard of the native tongue; nothing paſſes for good language, but what is believed to be Engliſh; every county thinks its own ſpeech preferable to its neighbour's, without entertaining any partiality for that of the chief town: and the populace of Edinburgh ſpeak

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a dialect not more intelligible, nor less disagreeable, to a native of Buchan, than the dialect of Buchan is to a native of Edinburgh.

The greater part of Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd* is written in a broad Scotch dialect. The sentiments of that piece are natural, the circumstances interesting; the characters well drawn, well distinguished, and well contrasted; and the fable has more probability than any other pastoral drama I am acquainted with. To an Englishman, who had never conversed with the common people of Scotland, the language would appear only antiquated, obscure, or unintelligible; but to a Scotchman who thoroughly understands it, and is aware of its vulgarity, it appears *ludicrous;* from the contrast between *meanness* of phrase, and *dignity* or *seriousness* of sentiment. This gives a farcical air even to the most affecting parts of the poem; and occasions an impropriety of a peculiar kind, which is very observable in the representation. And accordingly, this play, with all its merit, and with a strong national partiality in its favour, has never given general satisfaction upon the stage.

I have finished a pretty full enumeration of examples; but am very far from supposing it so complete, as to exhibit every species of ludicrous absurdity. Nor am I certain, that the reader will be pleased with my arrangement, or even admit that all my examples

amples have the ludicrous character. But ſlight inaccuracies, in an inquiry ſo little connected with practice, will perhaps be overlooked as not very material; eſpecially when it is conſidered, that the ſubject, though familiar, is both copious and delicate, and tho' frequently ſpoken of by philoſophers in general terms, has never before been attempted, ſo far as I know, in the way of induction. At any rate, it will appear from what has been ſaid, that the theory here adopted is plauſible at leaſt; and that the philoſophy of Laughter is not wholly unſuſceptible of method. And they who may think fit to amuſe themſelves at any time with this ſpeculation, whatever ſtreſs they may lay upon my reaſoning, will perhaps find their account in my collection of examples. And, provided they ſubſtitute a more perfect theory of their own in its ſtead, I ſhall not be offended, if by means of theſe very examples they ſhould find out and demonſtrate the imperfection of mine.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Limitations of the preceding doctrine. Incongruity not Ludicrous, I. When cuſtomary and common; nor, II. When it excites any powerful emotion in the beholder, as, 1. Moral Diſapprobation, 2. Indignation or Diſguſt, 3. Pity, or, 4. Fear; III. Influence of Good-breeding upon Laughter; IV. Of Similitudes, as connected with this ſubject; V. Recapitulation.

THAT an oppoſition of relation and contrariety is often diſcernible in thoſe things which we call Ludicrous, ſeems now to be ſufficiently proved. But does every ſuch oppoſition or mixture of contrariety and relation, of ſuitableneſs and incongruity, of likeneſs and diſſimilitude, provoke laughter? This requires further diſquiſition.

I. If an old Greek or Roman were to riſe from his grave, and ſee the human head and ſhoulders overſhadowed with a vaſt periwig; or were he to contemplate the native hairs of

a fine gentleman arranged in the preſent form *, part ſtanding erect, as if their owner were beſet with hobgoblins, and part by means of greaſe and meal conſolidated into paſte: he could hardly fail to be ſtruck with the appearance; and I queſtion, whether the features even of Heraclitus himſelf, or of the younger Cato, would not relax a little upon the occaſion. For in this abſurd imitation of nature, we have likeneſs coupled with diſſimilitude, and imaginary grace with real deformity, and inconvenience ſought after with eagerneſs, and at conſiderable expence. Yet in theſe faſhions they who are accuſtomed to them do not perceive any thing ridiculous. Nay, were we to ſee a fine lady dreſſed according to the mode ſtill extant in ſome old pictures, with her treſſes all hanging about her eyes, in diſtinct and equal portions, like a bunch of candles, and twiſted into a hundred ſtrange curls, we ſhould certainly think her a laughable phenomenon; though the ſame object two centuries ago would have been gazed at with admiration and delight. There are few incongruities to which *cuſtom* will not reconcile us †. Nay,

* In the year 1764.

† In the age of James the Firſt, when faſhion had conſecrated the *Pun* and *Paronomaſia*, the hearers of a quibbling preacher, were, I doubt not, both attentive and ſerious; as the univerſal prevalence of witticiſm,

Nay, so wonderfully ductile is the taste of some people, that, in the various revolutions of fashion, they find the same thing *charming* while in vogue, which when obsolete is altogether *frightful*. — Incongruity, therefore, in order to be ludicrous, must be in some measure uncommon.

To this it will be objected, that those ludicrous passages in books, that have been many times laughed at by the same person, do not entirely lose their effect by the fre-

even on solemn occasions, would almost annihilate its ludicrous effect. But it may be doubted, whether any audience in Great Britain would now maintain their gravity, if they were to be entertained with such a sermon, as *Sulton's Caution for the Credulous*; from which, for the reader's amusement, I transcribe the following passages: — "Here I have *undertaken* one who hath *overtaken* many, a *Machiavillian*, (or rather a *matchless villian*), one that professeth himself to be a *friend*, when he is indeed a *fiend*. — His greatest *amity* is but dissembled *enmity*. — His *Ave* threatens a *væ*; and therefore listen not to his treacherous *Ave*, but hearken unto Solomon's *Cave*; and though he speaketh favourably, believe him not. — Though I call him but a *plain* flatterer, (for I mean to deal very *plainly* with him), some compare him to a devil. If he be one, these words of Solomon are a *spell* to *expel* this devil. — *Wring* not my words, to *wrong* my meaning. I go not about to crucifie the *sons*, but the *sins* of men. — Some flatter a man for their own private benefit: — this man's heart thou hast in thy pocket; for if thou *find in thy purse* to give him presently, he will *find in his heart* to love thee everlastingly." *A Caution for the Credulous. By Edw. Sulton, Preacher. quarto. pp.* 44. *Aberdeen printed*, 1629. *Edinburgh reprinted*, 1696.

quency

quency of their appearance. But many circumſtances concur to perpetuate the agreeable effect of thoſe paſſages. We forget them in the intervals of reading, and thus they often become almoſt new to us: — when we read them a ſecond or third time, the remembrance of the former emotion may ſerve to heighten the preſent; — when we read them in company, or hear them read, our emotions are enforced by ſympathy; — and all this while the wit or humour remains the ſame, unimpaired and unaffected by accidental aſſociations. —— Whereas, on the other hand, there are many circumſtances that tend in time to obliterate, or at leaſt to ſoften, what at firſt might ſeem ridiculous in modes of converſation or dreſs. For things are not always agreeable or diſagreeable in proportion to their intrinſic beauty or deformity; much will depend on extraneous and accidental connections: and, as men who live in ſociety do daily acquire new companions, by whom their manners are in ſome degree tinctured; ſo whatever is driven about in the tide of human affairs is daily made a part of ſome new aſſemblage, and daily contracts new qualities from thoſe things that chance aſſociates with it. A vaſt periwig is in itſelf perhaps ſomewhat ridiculous; but the perſon who wears it may be a venerable character. Theſe two objects, being conſtantly united, derive new qualities from each other: — the wig may at firſt

raiſe a ſmile at the expence of the wearer, but the wearer will at laſt render even his wig reſpectable. The fine lady may have a thouſand charms, every one of which is more than ſufficient to make us fond of the little irregularities of her temper, and much more to reconcile us to any awkward diſpoſition of her ringlets or apparel. And the fine gentleman, whoſe hair in its economy ſo little reſembles that of Milton's Adam *, may be, what no ungracefulneſs of ſhape or feature will ever expoſe to ridicule, a faithful friend, a valiant ſoldier, an agreeable companion, or a dutiful ſon. — Our natural love of ſociety, the various and ſubſtantial pleaſures we derive from that ſource, and our proneneſs to imitation, not to mention the power of cuſtom, ſoon reconcile us to the manners of thoſe with whom we live; and therefore cannot fail to recommend their external appearance.

All the nations in Europe, and perhaps all the nations on earth, are, in ſome particulars of dreſs or deportment, mutually ridiculous to one another; and to the vulgar of each nation, or to thoſe who have never been from home, nor converſed with ſtrangers, the peculiarities of foreign behaviour are

* ——— hyacinthin locks
Round from his parted forelock manly hung
Cluſtering, but not beneath his ſhoulders broad.
Paradiſe Loſt, *book* 4.

moſt

moſt apt to appear ludicrous. Perſons who, by travel or extenſive acquaintance, are become familiar with foreign manners, ſee nothing ridiculous in them: and it is therefore reaſonable, that a diſpoſition to laugh at the dreſs and geſtures of a ſtranger (provided theſe be unaffected on his part) ſhould be taken for a mark of ruſticity, as well as of ill-nature. Tragedies written in rhime, or pronounced in Recitative, may be thought ridiculous, when one has ſeen but little of them; but it is eaſy to give a reaſon why they ſhould be highly and ſeriouſly intereſting in France and Italy. That cannot be ludicrous, that muſt, on the contrary, be the object of admiration, to which we have been accuſtomed to annex ideas of feſtivity and leiſure, of beauty and magnificence, which we have always heard ſpoken of as a matter of univerſal concern, and with which from our infancy we have been acquainted.

May we not, then, ſet it down, as a character of Ludicrous abſurdity, that it is in ſome degree *new and ſurpriſing?* Witticiſms that appear to be ſtudied give offence, inſtead of entertainment: and nothing ſets off a merry tale to ſo great advantage as an unpromiſing ſimplicity of ſtyle and manner. By virtue of this negative accompliſhment, men of moderate talents have been known to contribute more to the mirth of the company, than thoſe could ever do, who, with ſuperior powers of genius, were more artful in their

their language, and more animated in their pronunciation. Conciſeneſs, too, when we intend a laughable concluſion, is an eſſential requiſite in telling a ſtory; nor ſhould any man attempt to be diffuſe in humorous narrative, but he whoſe wit and eloquence are very great. A joke is always the worſe for being expected: the longer it is withheld, after we are made to look for it, the more will its volatile ſpirit loſe by evaporation. The greateſt maſterpieces in ludicrous writing would become inſipid, if too frequently peruſed; *decies repetita placebit* is a character that belongs to few of them: and I believe every admirer of Cervantes and Fielding would purchaſe at a conſiderable price the pleaſure of reading Tom Jones and Don Quixote for the firſt time. It is true, a good comedy, well performed, may entertain the ſame perſon for many ſucceſſive evenings; but ſome varieties are always expected, and do generally take place, in each new repreſentation; and though the wit and the buſineſs of every ſcene ſhould come at laſt to be diſtinctly remembered, there will ſtill be ſomething in the art of the player, which one would wiſh to ſee repeated.

II. But as every ſurpriſing incongruity is not ludicrous, we muſt purſue our ſpeculations a little further.

1. A more ſtriking abſurdity there is not in the whole univerſe, than a vitious man. His frame and faculties are human: his mo-

ral nature, originally inclined to rectitude, is ſadly perverted, and applied to purpoſes not leſs unſuitable to humanity, than dancing is to a bear, or a ſword and ſnuff-box to a monkey. He judges of things, not by their proper ſtandard, nor as they are in themſelves, but as they appear through the medium of his own variable and artificial appetites; as the clown is ſaid to have applied his candle to the ſun-dial to ſee how the night went. He overlooks and loſes real good, in order to attain that of which he knows not whether it be good, or whether it be attainable; like the dog in the fable, loſing the ſubſtance by catching at a ſhadow. He juſtifies his conduct to his own mind, by arguments whereof he ſees the fallacy; like the thief endeavouring to enrich himſelf by ſtealing out of his own pocket. He purpoſes to take up and reform, whenever his appetites are fully gratified; like the ruſtic, whoſe plan was, to wait till the water of the river ſhould run by, and then paſs over dry-ſhod. He attempts what is beyond his reach, and is ruined by the attempt; like the frog that burſt by endeavouring to blow herſelf up to the ſize of an ox. —— In a word, more blunders and abſurdities, than ever the imitators of Eſop aſcribed to the beaſts, or Joe Millar to the Scots and Iriſh, might eaſily be traced out in the conduct of the wicked man. And yet Vice, however it may *ſurpriſe* by its novelty or enormity, is by

by no means an object of laughter, even to those who perceive in it all the absurdities I have specified. We pity, and in some cases we abhor, the perpetrator; but our mind must be depraved like his own, if we laugh at him.

But can pity, abhorrence, and risibility, be excited by the same object, and at the same time? Can the painful passions of hatred and horror, and the pleasurable feeling that accompanies laughter, exist at one and the same instant in a well-informed mind? Can that amuse and delight us by its absurdity, which our moral principle, armed with the authority of Heaven, declares to be shameful, and worthy of punishment? It is impossible: emotions, so different in their nature, and so unequal in power, cannot dwell together; the weaker must give place to the stronger. And which is the weaker? — moral disapprobation, or the ludicrous sentiment? Are the pleasures of wit and humour a sufficient counterpoise to the pangs of a wounded spirit? Are a jest and a generous action equally respectable? In affliction, in sickness, at the hour of death, which is the better comforter, an approving conscience, or a buffoon? — the remembrance of a well-spent life, or of our connections with a witty society? — The glow-worm and the sun are not less susceptible of comparison. — It would seem then, that those absurdities in ourselves or others, which provoke the dis-

approbation

approbation of the moral faculty, cannot be ludicrous; becauſe in a ſound mind they give riſe to emotions inconſiſtent with, and far more powerful than, that whereof laughter is the outward indication.

But what do you ſay of thoſe *Comedies* and *Satires*, which put us out of conceit with our vices, by expoſing them to laughter? Such performances, ſurely cannot be all unnatural; and if they are not, may not vice be made a ludicrous object? — Our follies, and vices of leſs enormity, may, I grant, be exhibited in very laughable colours; and if we can be prevailed on to ſee them in a *ridiculous* light, that is, both to *laugh at* and to *deſpiſe* them, our reformation may be preſumed to be in ſome forwardneſs: and hence the utility of *ridicule*, as an inſtrument of moral culture. — But if we only *laugh at* our faults, without *deſpiſing* them, that is, if they appear *ludicrous* only, and not *ridiculous*, it is to be feared, that we ſhall be more inclined to love than to hate them: and hence the imperfection of thoſe writings, in which human follies are made the ſubject of mere pleaſantry and amuſement. — I cannot admit, that to a ſound mind undiſguiſed immorality can ever ceaſe to be diſguſtful; tho' I allow, that the guilty perſon may poſſeſs qualities ſufficient to render him agreeable upon the whole. This indeed happens too often in life; and it is this that makes bad company ſo fatally enſnaring. This too, the

Comic Muſe, laying aſide the character of a moraliſt, and aſſuming that of a pimp, has too often introduced upon the ſtage. But, however profligate a poet may be, we are not to ſuppoſe, that downright wickedneſs can ever in itſelf be a laughable object to any decent aſſembly of rational beings. The *Provoked Wife*, the *Old Bachelor*, the *Beggar's Opera*, are dangerous plays no doubt, and ſcandalouſly immoral; but it is the wit and the humour, not the villany, of Brute, Belmour, and Macheath, that makes the audience merry; and Vanburgh, Congreve and Gay, are blameable, not becauſe they have made beaſtlineſs, robbery, lying, and adultery, ludicrous, (for that I believe was not in their power), but becauſe they adorn their reſpective reprobates with engaging qualities to ſeduce others into imitation. — But may not criminal adventures be ſo diſguiſed and miſrepreſented, as to extort a ſmile even from a man of good principles? This may be, no doubt; for, as the forms of falſehood are infinite, it is not eaſy to ſay how many ſtrange things may be affected by miſrepreſentation. While the moral faculty is inactive or neuter, the ludicrous ſentiment may operate; but to have a juſt ſenſe of the enormity of a crime, and at the ſame time to laugh at it, ſeems impoſſible, or at leaſt unnatural: — and therefore, we may venture to repeat, that moral diſapprobation is a more powerful emotion than laughter; and conſequently,

consequently, that both, as their natures are inconsistent, cannot at the same time prevail in a well-informed mind. "They are fools 'who laugh at sin;" — and, whatever may be the practice of profligates, or of good men under the influence of a temporary infatuation, the common feelings of mankind do not warrant so gross an impropriety.

As to *Satire*, we must observe, that it is of two sorts, the Comic and the Serious; that human foibles are the proper objects of the former, and vices and crimes of the latter; and that it ought to be the aim of the satirist to make those ridiculous, and these detestable. I know not how it comes to pass, that the Comic Satire should be so much in vogue; but I find that the generality of critics are all for the moderation and smiling graces of the courtly Horace, and exclaim against the vehemence and vindictive zeal of the unmannerly Juvenal. They may as well blame Sophocles for not adopting the style of Aristophanes, and insist that Cicero should have arraigned Verres in the language of Anacreon. Nor do Horace and Juvenal admit of comparison in this respect *; any more

* Nor indeed in any respect. Different in their views, and in their subjects, they differ no less in style. That of Horace (in his satires) is indeed superlatively elegant, but easy, familiar, and apparently artless. The style of Juvenal is elaborate, harmonious, vehement, poetical, and often sublime.

than a chapter of the Tale of a Tub can be compared with one of the Saturday papers in the Spectator. These poets had different views, and took different subjects; and therefore it was right that there should be a difference in their manner of writing. Had Juvenal made a jest of the crimes of his contemporaries, all the world would have called him a bad writer and a bad man. And had Horace, with the severity of Juvenal, attacked the impertinence of coxcombs, the pedantry of the Stoics, the fastidiousness of luxury, and the folly of avarice, he would have proved himself ignorant of the nature of things, and even of the meaning of his own precept:

——— Adsit
Regula, peccatis quæ pœnas irroget æquas,
Ne scutica dignum horribili sectere flagello *.

That neither Horace nor Juvenal ever endeavoured to make us laugh at crimes, I will not affirm; but for every indiscretion of this kind they are to be condemned, not imitated. And this is not the general character of their satire. Horace laughed at the

* Let rules be fix'd that may our rage contain,
And punish faults with a proportion'd pain:
And do not flay him, who deserves alone
A whipping for the fault that he has done.
Creech.

follies

follies and foibles of mankind; ſo far he did well. But Juvenal (if his indecencies had died with himſelf) might, as a moral ſatiriſt, be ſaid to have done better. Fired with honeſt indignation at the unexampled degeneracy of his age; and, diſdaining that tameneſs of expreſſion and ſervility of ſentiment, which in ſome caſes are infallible marks of a daſtardly ſoul, he dragged Vice from the bower of pleaſure and from the throne of empire, and exhibited her to the world, not in a ludicrous attitude, but in her genuine form; a form of ſuch loathſome uglineſs, and hideous diſtortion, as cannot be viewed without horror.

We repeat therefore, that wickedneſs is no object of laughter; the diſapprobation of conſcience, and the ludicrous ſentiment, being emotions inconſiſtent in their nature, and very unequal in power. In fact, the latter emotion is generally weak, and never ſhould be ſtrong; while the former in every mind ought to be, and in every ſound mind is, the moſt powerful principle of the human conſtitution.

2. Further: When ſacred things are profaned by meanneſs of alluſion and language, the incongruity will not force a ſmile from a well-diſpoſed perſon, except it ſurpriſe him in an unguarded moment. I could quote, from Blackmore and Rutherford, thoughts as incongruous as any that ever diſgraced literature, but which are too ſhocking to raiſe any

any other emotions than horror and indignation. From an author far more reſpectable I ſhall give one inſtance, to ſhow how debaſing it is, even to a great genius, to become a flatterer.

> Falſe heroes, made by flattery ſo,
> Heaven can ſtrike out, like ſparkles, at a blow;
> But, ere a prince is to perfection brought,
> He coſts Omnipotence a ſecond thought:
> With toil and ſweat,
> With hardening cold and forming heat,
> The Cyclops did their work repeat,
> Before th' impenetrable ſhield was wrought,
> &c. *

Anger too is generally, while it laſts, a preſervative againſt riſible impreſſions; whence great laughers are ſuppoſed to be good-natured. While all England laughed at the heroes of the Dunciad, Colley Cibber and his brethren were, I dare ſay, perfectly ſerious. And if the gravity of Edmund Curll was overcome by that "account of his poiſoning," which no other perſon's gravity could ever withſtand, he muſt have poſſeſſed a great deal of philoſophy or of inſenſibility. Socrates, in the Athenian theatre, joining in the laugh that Ariſtophanes had raiſed againſt him, is ſpoken of by old authors as a ſingular inſtance of ſelf-command: which I mention, not with a view to compare the ſage with

* Dryden's Threnodia Auguſtalis.

the

the bookſeller, but to ſhow, that anger and laughter were ſuppoſed to have the ſame influence on each other two thouſand years ago, which they are found to have at this preſent time.

3. Even pity alone is, for the moſt part, of power ſufficient to controul riſibility. To one who could diveſt himſelf of that affection, a wooden leg might perhaps appear ludicrous; from the ſtriking contraſt of incongruity and ſimilitude; — and in fact we find that Butler has made both himſelf and his readers merry with an implement of this ſort that pertained to the expert Crowdero; and that Smollet has taken the ſame freedom, for the ſame purpoſe, with his friend Lieutenant Hatchway. But he who forgets humanity ſo far, as to ſmile at ſuch a memorial of misfortune in a living perſon, will be blamed by every good man. We expect, becauſe from experience we know it is natural, that pity ſhould prevail over the ludicrous emotion.

" Many a Scotch Preſbyterian (ſays Hut-
" cheſon, in his *Reflections upon Laughter)*
" has been put to it to preſerve his gravity,
" upon hearing the application of Scripture
" made by his countryman Dr Pitcairn, as
" he obſerved a croud in the ſtreets about
" a maſon, who had fallen along with his
" ſcaffold, and was overwhelmed with the
" ruins of the chimney which he had been
" building, and which fell immediately af-
" ter

" ter the fall of the poor maſon: Bleſſed " are the dead which die in the Lord, for " they reſt from their labours, and their " works follow them." — For the honour of the learned phyſician's memory, I hope the ſtory is not true. Such wantonneſs of impiety, and ſuch barbarity of inſult, is no object of laughter, but of horror. And I confeſs, I ſhould have no good opinion of any Preſbyterian, or of any perſon, who could find it difficult to preſerve his gravity on hearing it told.

4. Fear is a paſſion, which would I think on almoſt any occaſion repreſs laughter. To conceal one's fear, one might feign a laugh; and any paſſion in extreme may produce a ſimilar convulſion: but nobody laughs at that which makes him ſeriouſly afraid, however incongruous its appearance may be. A friend of mine dreamed that he ſaw the devil, and awoke in a great fright. He deſcribed the phantaſm very minutely; and ſure a more ridiculous one was never imagined; but, inſtead of laughter, his countenance betrayed every ſymptom of horror; for the dream had made a ſtrong impreſſion, nor could he for many months think of it without uneaſineſs. It is ſtrange, that the common people, who are ſo much afraid of the devil, ſhould fancy him to be of a ludicrous figure, with horns, a tail, and cloven feet, united to the human form. Sir Thomas Brown, with no little plauſibility, derives

this conceit from the Rabbins *. But the Romans, from their aſcribing unaccountable fear to the agency of Pan, whoſe ſuppoſed figure was the ſame, appear to have been poſſeſſed with a ſimilar ſuperſtition, in whatever way they came by it. Satyrs, however, were believed to be merry beings; always piping and dancing, and friſking about, cracking their jokes, and throwing themſelves into antic attitudes; and indeed when they are introduced in a picture, they generally convey ſomewhat of a ludicrous impreſſion, as the ſight of ſuch an animal, ſuppoſed to be harmleſs, could hardly fail to do.

III. Good-breeding lays many reſtraints upon laughter, and upon all other emotions that diſplay themſelves externally. And this leads me to ſpeak of thoſe refinements in wit and humour, which take place in ſociety, according as mankind improve in polite behaviour.

Lord Froth, in the play called the Double Dealer †, and Lord Cheſterfield, in a book of letters which ſome think might have borne the ſame appellation, declaim vehemently againſt laughter: — "there is nothing more "unbecoming a perſon of quality, than to "laugh; 'tis ſuch a vulgar thing; every

* Pſeudodoxia Epidemica, book 5. chap. 21.

† Act 1. ſcene 4.

" body can laugh." Influenced by a doctrine of ſo high authority, many of my readers may, I am afraid, have been inclined to think hardly of me, for analyſing vulgar witticiſms, and inquiring into the nature of a phenomenon, which can no longer ſhow its face in genteel company. And therefore it may be proper for me to ſay a word or two in defence, firſt of myſelf, and ſecondly of my ſubject.

In behalf of myſelf I can only plead, that Laughter, however unfaſhionable, is a real and a natural expreſſion of a certain human emotion, or inward feeling; and has been ſo, for any thing I know to the contrary, ever ſince the days of Adam; that therefore it is as liable to the cognizance of philoſophy, as any other natural fact; and that we are to judge of it, rather from its unreſtrained energies, than from the appearances it may aſſume under the control of affectation or delicacy. The foot of a Chineſe beauty is whiter, no doubt, and prettier, than that of a Scotch highlander; yet I would adviſe thoſe who are curious to know the parts and proportions of that limb, to contemplate the clown rather than the lady. To be maſter of one's own temper, is a moſt deſirable thing; and much more pleaſant it is, to live with ſuch as are ſo, than among thoſe who, without caution or diſguiſe, ſpeak, and look, and act, according to the impulſe of paſſion: but the philoſopher who would analyſe anger,

ger, pride, jealouſy, or any other violent emotion, will do well to take its phenomena rather from the latter than from the former. Juſt ſo, in tracing out the cauſe of laughter, I did not think it neceſſary or expedient to confine my obſervation to thoſe pleaſantries which the *ſentimental* critic would honour with a ſimper: it ſuited my purpoſe better to attend to examples, which, whether really laughed at or no, the generality of mankind would acknowledge to be laughable.

That all men are not equally inclined to laughter; and that ſome may be found, who rarely indulge in it themſelves, and actually diſlike it in others, cannot be denied. But they are greatly miſtaken, who ſuppoſe this character to be the effect of good-breeding, or peculiar to high life. In the cottage you will find it, as well as in the drawing room. Nor is profuſe laughter peculiar to low life: it is a weakneſs incident to all ſtations; though I believe, that among the *wiſer* ſort, both of clowns and of quality, it may be leſs common.

But the preſent inquiry does not ſo much regard laughter itſelf, as that pleaſurable emotion or ſentiment, whereof laughter is the outward ſign, and which may be intenſely felt by thoſe who do not laugh at all; even as the perſon who never weeps may yet be very tender-hearted. Nay as the keeneſt and moſt rational ſorrow is not the moſt apt to expreſs itſelf in tears; ſo the moſt admi-

rable performances in wit and humour are not perhaps the moſt laughable; admiration being one of thoſe powerful emotions that occaſionally engroſs the whole ſoul, and ſuſpend the exerciſe of its faculties. — And therefore, whatever judgement the reader may have formed concerning the lawfulneſs, expediency, or propriety, of this viſible and audible convulſion called Laughter; my account of the cauſe of that internal emotion which generally gives riſe to it, may be allowed to be pardonable, if it ſhall be found to be juſt. Nor does Lord Cheſterfield, as I remember, object to this emotion, nor to a ſmile as the outward expreſſion of it, ſo long as the ſaid ſmile is not ſuffered to degenerate into an open laugh.

Good-breeding is the art of pleaſing thoſe with whom we converſe. Now we cannot pleaſe others, if we either ſhow them what is unpleaſing in ourſelves, or give them reaſon to think that we perceive what is unpleaſing in them. Every emotion, therefore, that would naturally ariſe from bad qualities in us, or from the view of them in others, and all thoſe emotions in general which our company may think too violent, and cannot ſympathiſe with, nor partake in, good-breeding requires that we ſuppreſs. Laughter, which is either too profuſe or too obſtreperous, is an emotion of this kind: and therefore, a man of breeding will be careful not to laugh much longer, or much oftener than others;

others; nor to laugh at all, except where it is probable, that the jeſt may be equally reliſhed by the company. — Theſe, and other reſtraints peculiar to poliſhed life, have, by ſome writers, been repreſented as productive of fraud, hypocriſy, and a thouſand other crimes, from which the honeſt, open, undeſigning ſavage is ſuppoſed to be entirely free. But, were this a fit place for ſtating the compariſon, we could eaſily prove, that the reſtraints of good-breeding render ſociety comfortable, and, by ſuppreſſing the outward energy of intemperate paſſions, tend not a little to ſuppreſs thoſe paſſions themſelves: while the unbridled liberty of ſavage life gives full play to every turbulent emotion, keeps the mind in continual uproar, and diſqualifies it for thoſe improvements and calm delights, that reſult from the exerciſe of the rational and moral faculties.

But to return. The more we are accuſtomed to any ſet of objects, the greater delicacy of diſcernment we acquire in comparing them together, and eſtimating their degree of excellence. By ſtudying many pictures one may become a judge of painting; by attending to the ornaments and proportions of many buildings, one acquires a taſte in architecture; by practiſing muſic, we improve our ſenſe of harmony; by reading many poems, we learn to diſtinguiſh the good from the bad. In like manner, by being converſant in works of wit and humour, and

and by joining in polite converſation, we refine our taſte in ridicule, and come to undervalue thoſe homelier jokes that entertain the vulgar. What improves individuals will in time improve nations. Plautus abounds in pleaſantries that were the delight of his own and of the following age, but which, at the diſtance of one hundred and fifty years, Horace ſcruples not to cenſure for their inurbanity *. And we find not a few even in Shakeſpeare (notwithſtanding the great ſuperiority of his genius) at which a critic of theſe days would be leſs inclined to laugh, than to ſhake his head. Nay in the time of Charles the Second, many things paſſed upon the Engliſh ſtage for excellent humour, which would now be intolerable. — And thus it is, that we are enabled to judge of the politeneſs of nations, from the delicacy of their Comic writers; and of the breeding and literature of individual men, from their turn of humour, from their favourite jokes and ſtories, and from the very ſound, duration, and frequency, of their laughter.

The converſation of the common people, though not ſo ſmooth, nor ſo pleaſing, as that of the better ſort, has more of the wildneſs and ſtrong expreſſion of nature. The common people ſpeak and look what they think, bluſter and threaten when they are angry, affect no ſympathies which they do

* Hor. Ar. Poet. verſ. 270.—275.

not

not feel, and when offended are at no pains to conceal their diſſatisfaction. They laugh when they perceive any thing ludicrous, without much deference to the ſentiments of their company; and, having little reliſh for delicate humour, becauſe they have been but little uſed to it, they amuſe themſelves with ſuch pleaſantry as in the higher ranks of life would offend by its homelineſs. Yet may it be ludicrous notwithſtanding? as thoſe paſſions in a clown or ſavage may be natural, which in the polite world men are very careful to ſuppreſs.

IV. Tropes and Figures introduce into ſerious writing a variety of diſproportionate images; which, however, do not provoke laughter, when they are ſo contrived as to raiſe ſome other emotion of greater authority. To illuſtrate this by examples taken from every ſpecies of trope and figure, is not neceſſary, and would be tedious. I ſhall confine my remarks to the Similitude or Compariſon; which is a very common figure, and contributes, more perhaps than any other, to render language emphatical, pictureſque, and affecting to the fancy.

Every Similitude implies two things; the idea to be illuſtrated, which I call the *principal idea*; and the object alluded to, for the purpoſe of illuſtration. Now if between theſe two there be a conſiderable inequality; if the one be mean and the other dignified, or if the one be of much greater dignity than the

the other; there may be reaſon to apprehend (ſuppoſing our theory juſt) that, by their appearing in one aſſemblage, a mixture of relation and contrariety may be produced, ſufficient to render the compariſon ludicrous; — of relation, ariſing from the likeneſs, — of contrariety, ariſing from the diſproportion. And that this is often the caſe, we have ſeen already. — But when Homer compares a great army to a flight of cranes, Hector to a rock, Ajax to an aſs, and Ulyſſes covered with leaves to a bit of live coal raked up among embers, the ſimilitudes, for all their incongruity, are quite ſerious; at leaſt they convey no riſible impreſſion to a reader of taſte when peruſing the poem. By attending a little to this matter, we ſhall perhaps be able to throw new light on our argument.

Similitudes, ranged according to their connection with the preſent ſubject, are diſtinguiſhable into three claſſes. 1. One ſublime or dignified object may be likened to another that is more ſublime, or more dignified. 2. An object comparatively mean may be likened to one that is ſublime. 3. An object comparatively ſublime may be likened to one that is mean.

1. If one great or dignified object is likened to another that is greater or more dignified, as when Homer compares Achilles in arms to the moon, to a comet, to the ſun,

and to a god *, our admiration is evidently heightened, and the principal idea improved, by the compariſon. But that which we greatly admire we ſeldom laugh at in any circumſtances, and perhaps never, when, together with admiration, it infuſes into the ſoul that ſweet and elevating aſtoniſhment which attends the perception of thoſe objects or ideas that we denominate ſublime. The emotion inſpired by the view of ſublimity is alſo in itſelf more powerful than that which gives riſe to laughter; at leaſt in all minds that are not weak by nature, nor depraved by habit. No perſon of a ſound mind ever laughed the firſt time he raiſed his eyes to contemplate the inſide of St Paul's cupola: nor, in performing any of the ſolemn offices of his function, would a judge, a magiſtrate, or a clergyman, be excuſed, if he were to give way to laughter. In vain would he plead, that his mind was at that moment ſtruck with a ludicrous conceit, or with the recollection of a merry ſtory: we ſhould ſay, that thoughts of a higher nature *ought* to have reſtrained him; — an idea which would not occur to us, if we were not conſcious of the natural ſubordination of the riſible propenſity. —— An object not abſolutely mean is rendered ſublime in ſome degree, by aſſo-

* Iliad, xix.

ciation with a ſublime idea. A *Pibroch* *, which in every other country would appear a jumble of unmeaning ſounds, may communicate ſublime impreſſions to a highlander of Scotland; not ſo much becauſe he underſtands its modulation, as becauſe it conveys to his mind the elevating ideas of danger, and courage, and armies, and military ſervice. And let me take this opportunity to obſerve, that, in like manner, a thing not ludicrous in itſelf may occaſion laughter, when it conveys to the mind any ludicrous idea related to it by cuſtom, or by any other aſſociating principle. It can hardly be ſaid, that the braying of an aſs is in itſelf more ludicrous (though perhaps it may be more diſſonant) than the neigh of a horſe; yet one may be inclined to ſmile when one hears it, by its bringing to mind the other qualities of that ſluggiſh animal, with which the wags

* A *Pibroch* is a ſpecies of tune peculiar, I think, to the highlands and weſtern iſles of Scotland. It is performed on a bagpipe, and differs totally from all other muſic. Its rhythm is ſo irregular, and its notes, eſpecially in the quick movement, ſo mixed and huddled together, that a ſtranger finds it almoſt impoſſible to reconcile his ear to it, ſo as to perceive its modulation. Some of theſe Pibrochs, being intended to repreſent a battle, begin with a grave motion reſembling a march; then gradually quicken into the onſet; run off with noiſy confuſion, and turbulent rapidity, to imitate the conflict and purſuit; then ſwell into a few flouriſhes of triumphant joy; and perhaps cloſe with the wild and ſlow wailings of a funeral proceſſion.

of

of both ancient and modern times have often made themſelves merry. And hence it is, that men of lively fancy, eſpecially if they have been accuſtomed to attend to the laughable ſide of things, are apt to ſmile at that in which others neither perceive, nor can imagine any thing ridiculous.

2. An object comparatively mean is often likened to one that is ſublime: in which caſe it may require great addreſs in the poet to maintain the majeſty of Epic or Didactic compoſition. Similitudes of this kind, if very diſproportionate, are not to be hazarded, while the principal idea retains its primitive meanneſs. The poet muſt firſt employ all his powers of harmony and language, to adorn and dignify it, by intereſting the affections of his reader: a branch of the poetic art, which, as I have elſewhere obſerved *, is univerſal in its application, and may give life and pathos to mere deſcriptions of external nature, as well as to the moſt ſublime efforts of the Epic or Tragic Muſe.

In the art of conferring dignity upon objects comparatively mean, Virgil excels all poets whatever. By a tenderneſs of ſentiment irreſiſtibly captivating; by a perpetual ſeries of the moſt pleaſing, pictureſque, and romantic imagery; by the moſt affecting di-

* Eſſay on Poetry and Muſic, part 1. chap. 3.

greſſions; and by a propriety, beauty, and ſweetneſs of language, peculiar to himſelf, and unattainable by all others; he makes his way to the heart of his readers, whatever be the ſubject: and ſo prepares them for alluſions and ſimilitudes, which in the hand of an ordinary poet might appear even ridiculouſly inadequate; but which, by his management, give an air of grandeur to the meaneſt things deſcribed in his divine Georgic. The very mouſe that undermines the threſhing-floor, he renders an animal of importance. For his bees we are intereſted, as for a commonwealth of reaſonable creatures. He compares them in one place to the Cyclops forging thunder. Yet, inadequate and even ludicrous as the compariſon muſt appear when it is thus mentioned, it has no ſuch effect as it appears in the poem. The reader is already ſo prepoſſeſſed and elevated with thoſe ideas of dignity that adorn the ſubject, that he is more diſpoſed to admire, than to laugh or cavil.

Mr John Philips had a happy talent in the Mock-Heroic, but was not equally fortunate in ſerious poetry. In his *Cyder*, he endeavours, in imitation of Virgil, to raiſe the ſubject by ſublime alluſions; but is apt to bring them in too abruptly, and before he has given ſufficient importance to the principal idea. Nor has he any pretenſions to that ſweetneſs and melody of ſtyle, which intoxicate the readers of the Mantuan poet, and prepare

prepare them for any impreſſion he is pleaſed to convey. And hence the language of Philips often takes the appearance of bombaſt; and ſome of his compariſons, inſtead of raiſing admiration by their greatneſs, tend rather to provoke a ſmile by their incongruity.

> The apple's outward form
> Delectable the witleſs ſwain beguiles,
> Till, with a writhen mouth and ſpattering noiſe,
> He taſtes the bitter morſel, and rejects
> Diſreliſh'd. Not with leſs ſurpriſe, than when
> Embattled troops with flowing banners paſs
> Through flowery meads delighted, nor diſtruſt
> The ſmiling ſurface; whilſt the cavern'd ground,
> With grain incentive ſtored, by ſudden blaze
> Burſts fatal, and involves the hopes of war
> In fiery whirls; full of victorious thoughts,
> Torn and diſmember'd, they aloft expire.

Had Virgil been to dignify this ſurpriſe by a magnificent alluſion, he would not have degraded the principal idea by low images, (like thoſe ſignified by the words *writhen mouth* * and *ſpattering noiſe*); but would

* This very *writhen mouth* ſeems to be an alluſion to Virgil;

> At ſapor indicium faciet manifeſtus, et *ora*
> Triſtia tentantum ſenſu *torquebit* amaror.
> *Georg.* ii. 247.

—— but it is to a part of Virgil, where ſimplicity is more ſtudied than elevation.

have

have employed all his art to raiſe it to ſuch elevation as might make the diſproportionate greatneſs of the object alluded to leſs obſervable *. —— Thomſon has imitated Virgil's manner with much better ſkill, in that beautiful paſſage of his Autumn †, too long for a quotation, where he compares a hive of bees ſuffocated with brimſtone to a city ſwallowed up by an earthquake.

In the Mock-Epic, where ridicule is often raiſed by exaggerating ſimilitudes, care is taken to introduce the pompous compariſon, while the principal idea appears in all its native inſignificance; and ſometimes the ridicule is heightened by a daſh of bombaſt, or by a trifling circumſtance unexpectedly in-

* In the third Georgic, Virgil, ſpeaking of the method of training ſteers to the plough and waggon, is at pains to dignify the ſubject by elegant language; but his figures are appoſite, and not at all too lofty for the occaſion:

Tu quos ad *ſtudium* atque uſum formabis agreſtem
Jam vitulos *hortare*, viamque inſiſte domandi,
Dum faciles *animi juvenum*, dum mobilis ætas, &c.
Verſ. 163.

Dryden, in his tranſlation, wants to riſe to higher elegance by means of bolder figures, which, however, being ill-choſen and ill-prepared, give a ludicrous air to the whole paſſage. He ſpeaks of *ſending the calf to ſchool*, of forming his mind with *moral precepts*, and inſtructing him in huſbandry, before he is perverted by *bad example*.

† Autumn, verſ. 1170.

troduced

troduced in the middle of affected ſolemnity.

But, in judging of ſimilitudes in all ſerious writing, it is neceſſary to attend to the point of likeneſs on which the compariſon turns: for two things may reſemble each other in one particular, which in all others are very unlike; and therefore a ſimilitude may, to an inattentive reader, appear incongruous, which is really proper and adequate. Thoſe critics who blame Virgil for the ſimile of the Cyclops above mentioned, would do well to conſider, that, though there be no reſemblance between a bee and a huge one-eyed giant, in the ſize and frame of their bodies, and as little between their reſpective employments and manufactures, there may, however, be a reſemblance between them in other things. The cyclops are eager to have the thunderbolt forged; the bees may be as eager in their way to fill their cells with honey: — the art of thunder-making employs a number of hands, each of whom has his particular department; and this alſo holds true of bees employed in the buſineſs of the hive. Now it is on account of their ſimilarity in theſe two reſpects *, that the poet compares them; and in theſe two reſpects they certainly may be compared. But I allow, that, in ſerious writing, a ſimilitude of this kind ought not to be attempted, but by an author of the very firſt rank; and

* See Virg. Geor. iv. 176.

therefore,

therefore, though I vindicate Virgil, I think it extremely hazardous to imitate him. And I am aware of the truth of part of the following remark of Pope, which I quote at length, (though ſome expreſſions in it do not perfectly coincide with the foregoing reaſonings), becauſe it ſeems to me to throw light on the preſent ſubject. "The uſe of the "grand ſtyle on little ſubjects is not only "ludicrous, but a ſort of tranſgreſſion a- "gainſt the rules of proportion and me- "chanics: it is uſing a vaſt force to lift a "feather. I believe it will be found a juſt "obſervation, that the low actions of life "cannot be put into a figurative ſtyle with- "out being ridiculous; but things natural "can. Metaphors raiſe the latter into dig- "nity, as we ſee in the Georgics; but "throw the former into ridicule, as in the "Lutrin. I think this may very well be ac- "counted for: laughter implies cenſure; "inanimate and irrational beings are not ob- "jects of cenſure; and therefore they may "be elevated as much as you pleaſe, and no "ridicule follows: but when rational be- "ings are repreſented above their real cha- "racter, it becomes ridiculous in art, be- "cauſe it is vitious in morality. The bees "in Virgil, were they rational beings, would "be ridiculous by having their actions and "manners repreſented on a level with crea- "tures ſo ſuperior as men; ſince it would

" imply folly or pride, which are the proper " objects of ridicule *."

3. A ſimilitude may imply an incongruous aſſemblage, when an object comparatively ſublime is likened to one that is mean. Homer and Virgil compare heroes, not only to beaſts, but even to things inanimate, without raiſing a ſmile by the contraſt. And the reaſon, as given already, is, that in theſe ſimilitudes there is ſomething which either takes off our attention from the incongruity, or raiſes within us an emotion more powerful than this of laughter.

Firſt, the quality that occaſions the compariſon may be in both objects ſo adequate, ſo ſimilar, and ſo ſtriking, as to take off our attention from the incongruity of the aſſemblage, or even to remove from the compariſon, when attentively conſidered, every incongruous appearance. Had Homer likened Paris to a horſe, becauſe he was good-natured and docile; Ajax to an aſs, becauſe he was dull; and Achilles to a lion, becauſe of his long yellow hair; the alluſions would probably have been ludicrous. But he likens Paris to a pampered horſe †, becauſe of his wantonneſs, ſwiftneſs, and luxurious life; Ajax to an aſs ‡, becauſe he is ſaid to have been as much ſuperior to the aſſault of the

* Pope's Poſtſcript to the Odyſſey.

† Iliad, vi. ‡ Iliad, xi.

Trojans, as that animal is to the blows of children; and Achilles to a lion *, on account of his ſtrength, fierceneſs, and impetuoſity. Hector he compares to a rock tumbling from the top of a mountain †, becauſe while he moved he was irreſiſtible, and when he ſtopped immoveable; qualities not more conſpicuous in the hero, than in the ſtone. Milton likens Satan to a whale ‡; not becauſe the one ſpouts ſalt water, as the other is vulgarly ſuppoſed to breathe out ſulphureous fire, but becauſe of his enormous ſize: and, to leſſen the incongruity, if any ſhould be ſuppoſed to remain, the poet is at great pains to raiſe our idea of the whale's magnitude:

> Him haply ſlumbering on the Norway foam
> The pilot of ſome ſmall night-founder'd ſkiff
> Deeming ſome iſland, oft, as ſeamen tell,
> With fixed anchor in his ſcaly rhind,
> Moors by his ſide. ——

But, ſecondly, it may happen, even in the higher poetry, that the compared qualities ſhall preſent an incongruous aſſociation, to the diſadvantage of the principal idea. In this caſe, as there is an oppoſition, of greatneſs in the principal idea, and meanneſs in the object alluded to, it will be ſomewhat

* Iliad, xx. † Iliad, xiii.

‡ Par. Loſt, book 1.

difficult

difficult to maintain true Epic dignity. It may, however, be done, by blending with the deſcription of the mean object ſome intereſting circumſtance, to take off the attention from the incongruity, and fix it on ſomething important or ſerious. Ulyſſes, going to ſleep, covered over with leaves, after ſwimming out naked from a ſhipwreck, is compared by Homer to a bit of live coal preſerved by a peaſant in a heap of embers:

> As ſome poor peaſant, fated to reſide
> Remote from neighbours, in a foreſt wide,
> Studious to ſave what human wants require,
> In embers heap'd preſerves the ſeeds of fire;
> Hid in dry foliage thus Ulyſſes lies,
> Till Pallas pour'd ſoft ſlumber on his eyes *.

This ſimile, when we attend to the point of likeneſs, will be found to have ſufficient propriety; the reſemblance being obvious, between a man almoſt deprived of life, and a brand almoſt extinguiſhed; between the foliage that defends Ulyſſes from cold, and probably from death, during the night, and the embers that keep alive the ſeeds of fire: yet if dreſſed up by a genius like Butler, it might aſſume a ludicrous appearance, from the diſproportionate nature of the things compared. But Homer, with great delicacy, draws off the reader's attention to the pea-

* Odyſſ. lib. 5.

ſant's ſolitary dwelling on the extremity of a frontier, where he had no neighbours to aſſiſt him in renewing his fire, if by any accident it ſhould go out. —— The poet is leſs delicate on another occaſion, when he likens the ſame hero, toſſing in his bed, and ſleepleſs through deſire to be avenged on the plunderers of his houſehold, to a man employed "in broiling on a great fire a ſtomach "full of fat and blood, and often turning "it, becauſe he is impatient to have it roaſted." This image is unpleaſing and deſpicable; and the compariſon muſt appear ridiculous to a modern reader: — though Boileau pleads, that the viand here mentioned was eſteemed a great delicacy by the ancients; though Euſtathius ſeems to think, that a low ſimilitude might in this place very well ſuit the beggarly condition of Ulyſſes; and though, in the opinion of Monſ. Dacier, the bag ſtuffed with fat and blood might, in Homer's days, convey a religious, and conſequently an important, idea.

When the object alluded to is pleaſing in itſelf, and the deſcription elegant, we are apt to overlook the incongruity of a ſimilitude, even where the diſproportion is very great; the ludicrous emotion being as it were ſuppreſſed by our admiration of the poetry, or the littleneſs of the object compenſated by its beauty. That famous paſſage in Virgil,

* Odyſſ. xx.

where

where Amata, roaming up and down, from the agitation of her mind, and the impulſe of a demon, is compared to a top whipped about by boys, has been called fuſtian by ſome critics, and burleſque by others *. In my opinion it is neither. The propriety in point of likeneſs is undeniable. The object alluded to, though in itſelf void of dignity, is however pleaſing; and receives elevation

* Demetrius Phalereus obſerves, that "Elegance of "language, by exciting admiration, makes the ridiculous "diſappear;" and adds, "that to expreſs a ludicrous "ſentiment in fine language is like dreſſing an ape in fine "cloaths. The words of Sappho, (continues he), when "Beauty is her theme, are ſweet and beautiful; as in "her poems on Love, on Air, and on the Halcyon. "Indeed all the beauties of language, and ſome of them "of her own invention, are interwoven with Sappho's "poetry. But the Ruſtic Bridegroom, and the Porter "at the Wedding, ſhe has ridiculed in a different ſtyle; "uſing very mean expreſſions, and a choice of words "leſs ſuitable to poetry than to proſe." *Demet. Phal.* § 166. 167. 168. —— An ape dreſſed in fine cloaths does not ceaſe to be ludicrous: and in the Mock-Heroic poem, where the ſubject is contemptible or mean, great elegance, or even magnificence, of diction, may heighten the ridicule; of which, the Lutrin, the Dunciad, the Rape of the Lock, and the Battle of the Frogs and Mice, abound in examples. —— But it is probable, that Demetrius is here ſpeaking of *Burleſque*, and that Sappho's poem on the wedding was of that character; — ſomething perhaps reſembling the Ballad, ſaid to be written by James I. King of Scotland, and commonly known by the name of *Chriſt's Kirk on the Green*. And it is true, that in *Burleſque* writing, as diſtinguiſhed from the *Mock-Heroic*, vulgarity of expreſſion is almoſt indiſpenſable. See above, chap. 2. ſect. iv. 9. 10. 11.

from

from the poetry, which is finiſhed in Virgil's beſt manner, and is indeed highly pictureſque, and very beautiful *.

What has been ſaid on the ſubject of Similitudes, when applied to the preſent purpoſe, amounts to this: "Incongruity does not appear ludicrous, when it is ſo qualified, or circumſtanced, as to raiſe in the mind ſome emotion more powerful than that of Laughter."

V. If, then, it be aſked, WHAT IS THAT QUALITY IN THINGS, WHICH MAKES THEM PROVOKE THAT PLEASING EMOTION OR SENTIMENT WHEREOF LAUGHTER IS THE EXTERNAL SIGN? I anſwer, IT IS AN UNCOMMON MIXTURE OF RELATION AND CONTRARIETY, EXHIBITED, OR SUPPOSED TO BE UNITED, IN THE SAME ASSEMBLAGE. If again it be aſked, WHETHER SUCH A MIXTURE WILL ALWAYS PROVOKE LAUGHTER? my anſwer is, IT WILL ALWAYS, OR FOR THE MOST PART, EXCITE THE RISIBLE EMOTION, UNLESS WHEN THE PERCEPTION OF IT IS ATTENDED WITH SOME OTHER EMOTION OF GREATER AUTHORITY.

* Ceu quondam torto volitans ſub verbere turbo,
Quem pueri magno in gyro vacua atria circum,
Intenti ludo exercent; ille actus habena
Curvatis fertur ſpatiis: ſtupet inſcia ſupra
Impubeſque manus, mirata volubile buxum.
Dant animos plagæ, &c. *Æneid*, vii. 378.

It

It cannot be expected, that I ſhould give a complete liſt of thoſe emotions that do commonly, in a ſound mind, bear down this ludicrous emotion. Several of them have been ſpecified in the courſe of this inquiry. We have ſeen, from the examples given, that moral diſapprobation, pity, fear, diſguſt, admiration, are among the number; to which every perſon, who attends to what paſſes in his own mind, may perhaps be able to add ſeveral others.

I am well aware, that the comparative ſtrength of our ſeveral emotions is not the ſame in each individual. In ſome the more ſerious affections are ſo prevalent, that the riſible diſpoſition operates but ſeldom, and with a feeble impulſe: in ſome, the latter predominates ſo much, that the others are ſcarce able to counteract its energy. It is hardly poſſible to arrive at principles ſo comprehenſive as to include the peculiarities of every individual. Theſe are ſometimes ſo inconſiſtent with the general law of the ſpecies, that they may be conſidered as deviations from the ordinary courſe of nature. In tracing *Sentimental Laughter* to its firſt principles, I have examined it, only as it is found to operate, for the moſt part, in the generality of mankind.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

An attempt to account for the ſuperiority of the moderns in Ludicrous Writing.

IT ſeems to be generally acknowledged, that the moderns are ſuperior to the ancient Greeks and Romans, in every ſort of Ludicrous Writing. If this be indeed the caſe, it is a fact that deſerves the attention of thoſe authors who make Wit, or Humour, the ſubject of their inquiry; ſince the ſame reaſonings that account for this fact muſt throw light on the philoſophy of laughter. But by thoſe people who argue for argument's ſake, probable reaſons might be urged, to ſhow, that we are not competent judges of the ancient humour, and therefore cannot be certain of the ſuperiority of the modern. Were I to defend this ſide of the queſtion, the following ſhould be my arguments.

Every thing that gives variety to the thoughts, the manners, and employments of men, muſt alſo tend to diverſify their converſations and compoſitions in general, and

their wit and humour in particular. Accordingly we find, that almoſt every profeſſion in life has a turn of humour, as well as of thinking and acting, peculiar in ſome degree to itſelf. The ſoldier, the ſeaman, the mechanic, the huſbandman, is more amuſed by the converſation of people of his own trade, than by that of others: and a ſpecies of wit ſhall be highly reliſhed in one club or ſociety, which in another would be but little attended to. We need not wonder, then, that in the humour of each country there ſhould be ſome peculiar character, to the forming of which, not only the language and manners, but even the climate and ſoil, muſt contribute, by giving a peculiar direction to the purſuits and thoughts of the inhabitants. Nor need we wonder, that each nation ſhould be affected moſt agreeably with its own wit and humour. For, not to mention the prejudice that one naturally entertains in favour of what is one's own, a native muſt always underſtand, better than foreigners can, the relations, contrarieties, and alluſions, implied in what is ludicrous in the ſpeech and writings of his countrymen.

Shakeſpeare's humour will never be adequately reliſhed in France, nor that of Moliere in England: and tranſlations of ludicrous writings are ſeldom popular, unleſs they exhibit ſomething of the manners and habits of thinking, as well as the language, of the people to whom they are addreſſed.

Echard's Terence, from having adopted ſuch a multitude of our cant phraſes, and proverbial alluſions, is perhaps more generally reliſhed in Great Britain, than a more literal and more elegant verſion would have been. Sancho Pança diverts us more in Motteux's Don Quixote, than in Jervas's Tranſlation, or Smollet's; becauſe he has more of the Engliſh clown, and leſs of the Spaniard, in the former, than in the latter. And a certain French author, to render his Tranſlation of Tom Jones more acceptable to his countrymen, and to clear it of what he fooliſhly calls Engliſh phlegm, has greatly abridged that incomparable performance, and, in my opinion, expunged ſome of the fineſt paſſages; thoſe converſation-pieces, I mean, which tend more immediately to the elucidation of the characters, than to the progreſs of the ſtory.

May there not, then, in ancient authors, be many excellent ſtrokes of wit and humour, which we miſapprehend, merely becauſe we cannot adequately reliſh? The dialogues of the Socratic philoſophers abound in pleaſantry, which is no doubt entertaining to a modern reader, but which does not at all come up to thoſe expectations that one would be apt to form of it from the high encomiums of Cicero, and other ancient critics: and may not this be partly imputed to our not ſufficiently underſtanding the Socratic dialogues? To us nothing appears more paltry in the execution, than the ridicule with which

which Ariſtophanes perſecuted Socrates: and yet we know, that it operated with wonderful energy on the Athenians, who, for refinement of taſte, and for wit and humour, were diſtinguiſhed among all the nations of antiquity. Does not this amount to a preſumption, that we are no competent judges of the humour of that profligate comedian?

Let it be remarked, too, that the ſphere moſt favourable to wit and humour is that which is occupied by the middle and lower ranks of mankind; perſons in high ſtations being obliged to maintain a reſerve unfriendly to riſible emotion, and to reduce their behaviour to an artificial uniformity, which does indeed anſwer many important purpoſes, but which, for the moſt part, diſqualifies them for filling any eminent place in humorous deſcription. Now we are much in the dark in regard to the manners that prevailed among the Greeks and Romans of the lower ſort: and there muſt have been, in their ludicrous writings, as there are in ours, many nice alluſions to trifling cuſtoms, to the news of the day, and to characters and incidents too inconſiderable to be minded by the hiſtorian, which none but perſons living at the time, and in a particular place, could ever comprehend; — as the writers of thoſe days had no notion of the modern practice of illuſtrating their own works with marginal annotations. Many authors, too, are loſt; and with them has probably periſhed (as we

remarked already) the ludicrous effect of innumerable parodies and turns of expreſſion, to be met with in Ariſtophanes, Plautus, Lucian, Horace, and other witty ancients. It is at leaſt certain, that there are in Shakeſpeare many parodies and alluſions, the propriety of which we cannot eſtimate, as the authors, cuſtoms, and incidents, referred to, are already forgotten.

From the cauſes now hinted at, works of wit and humour would appear to be leſs permanent in their effects, and more liable to become obſcure, than any other literary compoſitions. Commentaries are now neceſſary to make Hudibras and the Dunciad thoroughly intelligible: and what a myſterious rhapſody would the Rape of the Lock be to thoſe, who, though well inſtructed in the language of Hooker and Spenſer, had never heard of ſnuff or coffee, watches or hoop-petticoats, beaus or lap-dogs, toilettes or card-tables! But the reaſonings of Euclid and Demoſthenes, the moral and natural paintings of Homer and Virgil, the pathos of Eloiſa's Epiſtle to Abelard, the deſcriptions of Livy and Tacitus, can never ſtand in need of commentaries to explain them, ſo long as the Greek, Latin, and Engliſh languages are tolerably underſtood; becauſe they are founded in thoſe ſuggeſtions of human reaſon, and thoſe appearances in the moral and material world, which are always

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the ſame, and with which every intelligent obſerver muſt in every age be acquainted.

I would not inſinuate, that all ſorts of Ludicrous writing are equally liable to loſe their effect, and be miſunderſtood. Thoſe muſt preſerve their reliſh unimpared through ages, which allude, — to our more permanent follies and abſurdities; like Horace's picture of an intruſive coxcomb, and the greater part of the ſatire which he levels at pedantry and avarice; — or to writings tranſcendently excellent; like the Virgilian cento of Auſonius, the Splendid Shilling of Philips, and the Batrachomyomachia erroneouſly aſcribed to Homer; — or to cuſtoms or opinions univerſally known; ſuch as Lucian's ridicule of the Pagan Theology, and that inimitable raillery on the abuſes of learning which is contained in the memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus. ——I mean only to ſay, that Ludicrous writing in general is extremely ſubject to the injuries of time; and that, therefore, the wit and humour of the ancient Greeks and Romans might have been far more exquiſite, than we at preſent have any poſitive reaſon to believe.

Such would be my plan of declamation, if I were to controvert the common opinion of our ſuperiority to the ancients in Ludicrous writing. But I am not anxious to diſpute this point; being ſatisfied, that the common opinion is true; and that, conſidering the advantages in this reſpect which the moderns

moderns enjoy, the caſe cannot well be otherwiſe.

Modern Ridicule, compared with the ancient, will be found to be, firſt, *more copious*, and, ſecondly, *more refined*.

I. The ſuperior COPIOUSNESS of the former may be accounted for, if we can ſhow, that to us many ſources of wit and humour are both open and obvious, which to the ancients were utterly unknown. It is indeed reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that they may have been acquainted with many ludicrous objects, whereof we are ignorant; but that we muſt be acquainted with many more, of which they were ignorant, will hardly be queſtioned by thoſe who admit, that laughter ariſes from incongruous and unexpected combinations of ideas; and that our fund of ideas is more ample and more diverſified than that of the Greeks and Romans, becauſe our knowledge is more extenſive both of men and of things. Far be it from me, to undervalue the attainments of that illuſtrious part of the human race. The Greeks and Romans are our maſters in all polite learning; and their knowledge is to ours, what the foundation is to a ſuperſtructure. Our ſuperiority, where we have any, is the conſequence of our being poſterior in time, and enjoying the benefit of their diſcoveries and example, as well as the fruits of our own induſtry. At any rate, the ſuperiority I now contend for is ſuch as the warmeſt admirer of

of the ancients may admit, without diſreſpect to their memory, or injury to their reputation.

To compare the late acquiſitions in knowledge with the ancient diſcoveries, would far exceed the bounds of a ſhort Eſſay, and is not neceſſary at preſent. All I mean to do, is to make a few brief remarks on the ſubject, with a view to account for the ſuperior *copiouſneſs* of modern ridicule.

That in moſt branches of philoſophy, and natural hiſtory, the moderns have greatly the advantage of the ancients, is undeniable. Hence we derive an endleſs multitude of notions and ideas unknown to antiquity, which, by being differently combined and compared, give riſe to innumerable varieties of that ſpecies of ludicrous aſſociation which is called Wit. Every addition to literature enlarges the ſphere of wit, by ſupplying new images, and new opportunities of tracing out unexpected ſimilitude: nor would the author of Hudibras have excelled ſo much in this talent, if he had not been diſtinguiſhed by uncommon acquiſitions in learning, as well as by a ſingular turn of fancy. One cannot read a canto of his extraordinary Poem, without diſcovering his ability in both theſe reſpects; or a page, without being ſtruck with ſome jocular alluſion, which could not have occurred to the wits of Greece or Rome, becauſe it depends on ideas with which they were unacquainted.

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The moderns are also better instructed in all the varieties of human manners. They know what the ancients were, and what they themselves are; and their improvements, in commerce, geography, and navigation, have wonderfully extended their knowledge of mankind within the two last centuries. They have seen, by the light of history, the greatest and politest nations gradually swallowed up in the abyss of barbarism, and again by slow degrees emerging from it. Their policy and spirit of adventure have made them well acquainted with many nations whose very existence was anciently unknown; and it is now easier to sail round the globe, than it then was to explore the coasts of the Mediterranean sea. Hence, I shall not say that we have acquired any superior knowledge of those faculties essential to human nature, which constitute the foundation of moral science: but hence it is clear, that we derive a very great variety of those ideas of the characters and circumstances of mankind, which by their different arrangements and colourings, form that species of ludicrous combination which is called Humour.

To be somewhat more particular: Certain forms of government are familiar to the moderns, of which the ancients knew almost nothing. I mention only the Feudal System; the influence whereof has in latter times wrought so amazing a change on the affairs

and manners of Europe. Other invaders have satisfied themselves with introducing their laws and customs gradually into a conquered province: but the subverters of the Roman empire, all at once, with a rapidity equal to that wherewith they marched and fought, gave new forms to society, new analogies to language, and a new direction to the thoughts and passions of men. Ideas of political subordination, such as had never occurred to the most fanciful projectors of Greece and Rome, now took possession of the human mind, and obliterated all the philosophy of the ancient republican. — One of the most immediate effects of this system was, to make a separation between the different orders of men, and to subject human intercourse to the rules of a more complex economy: — this would be the natural consequence of instituting the several gradations of vassalage, and annexing high prerogatives to the condition of a superior. In a republic, the citizens must often meet together upon the footing of equality and mutual independence; and, having nearly the same purposes in view, and enjoying the same privileges, will contract similar habits of thinking, and be animated with similar passions, and marked with a sameness of character, or at least of external deportment. In a despotic empire, where all the subjects are equally insignificant and hopeless, and where to remain undistinguished is the best and

almoſt the only ſecurity, picturesque diverſities of genius and diſpoſition are ſtill leſs to be expected. But in a feudal ſtate, where the primitive ſpirit of freedom predominates, the orders of men, on account of their vaſt inequality, muſt form themſelves into ſeparate ſocieties, which, while their reſpective privileges and pretenſions keep them active, mutual jealouſy or ambition will prompt to make a figure, each in its own particular ſphere, and by means peculiar to itſelf. — It has been remarked, that varieties of character are more perceptible in England, than in other countries: and I ſubmit to the reader, whether this may not be accounted for, on the principles here ſpecified. Were the country-gentlemen of England to live in towns, or to meet frequently in a common *forum*, or in any other way to form one large ſociety, their peculiarities would diſappear, and their behaviour (like that of citizens in a republic) would become externally uniform, or nearly ſo: and if they were not conſcious of their own independence and privileges, they would not have the courage to think for themſelves, but would probably be (like many of their neighbours) imitators of one another, or inſipid followers of the faſhion. Let me not be ſuppoſed to inſinuate, that variety of *genius* and *temper* is peculiar to any one form of government: — different characters I am ſenſible that there always will be, where-ever there are different men: — my meaning

meaning is, that the *manners* of individuals, and thoſe outward circumſtances of life that ſupply materials for wit and humour, are liable to be more diverſified by ſome forms of government than by others, and by free governments of the feudal form more perhaps than by any other. — The laughable peculiarities that diſtinguiſh Don Quixote, Parſon Adams, Sir Roger de Coverley, Squire Weſtern, and many other heroes of the Comic Romance, are ſuch as men could not be ſuppoſed to acquire, if they did not live ſecluded in ſome degree from the general intercourſe of ſociety. We ſmile, when ſailors uſe at land the language of the ſea, when learned pedants interlard ordinary diſcourſe with Greek and Latin idioms, when coxcombs bring abroad into the world the dialect and geſticulations of their own club, and, in general, when a man expreſſes himſelf on all ſubjects in figures of ſpeech ſuggeſted by what belongs to his own profeſſion only. Now what but habits contracted in a narrow ſociety could produce theſe peculiarities? And does not this prove, that ludicrous qualities are incident to men who live detached in a narrow ſociety, and, therefore, that the feudal, or any other, form of government, that tends to keep the different orders of men ſeparate, muſt be favourable to wit and humour, and ſo enlarge the ſphere of ludicrous writing? — A general acquaintance with mankind, produces a facility of

doing what is conformable to general manners, and wears off those improprieties and strange habits that divert by their singularity.

But whatever account the reader may make of these reasonings, this at least he must allow, that from the feudal government arose one institution, to wit, Chivalry, on which gave occasion to Cervantes to invent a species of writing, as fertile of humour, (and of wit, too, if Hudibras be an imitation of it) as any that ever appeared in the world. Need we wonder, then, that the modern ridicule should be more *copious* than the ancient? Religious Controversy is in modern times a never-failing source of wit and humour. But in the days of Greece and Rome, there was no such thing; the Pagan superstitions being too absurd to admit of controversy. From this source we derive many witty passages in the writings of Chaucer, Erasmus, Pascal, and others; and it is to this we are indebted for Hudibras and The Tale of a Tub, two of the most laughable (I wish I could say the most salutary) pieces of ridicule that ever were written. It may seem surprising, that things so serious and awful, as superstition and enthusiasm, should lie open to the attack of the wit and buffoon, as well as of the satirist. Indeed, if we estimate them by their effects in society, and their power over the human mind, they would seem worthy

thy to be reckoned among the most tremendous phenomena in nature. And so they are, no doubt; and, for this reason, may be made the ground-work of tragedy, serious satire, rhetorical invective, and other sublime compositions. But when we consider them as they are in themselves, and with a view to the causes whence they frequently arise, the arguments by which they are supported, and the strange vagaries into which they have led rational beings, we must be struck with something ludicrous in their appearance; particularly, with the vast disproportion between their real and imaginary dignity; between their genuine effects, and those that, previously to experience, we should be inclined to expect from them. And thus it is, that superstition and enthusiasm, while they appear in the light, not of crimes, but of infirmities, may very well be made the subject of Comic Ridicule. But let the torch of wit be brandished against them with discretion superior to that of the Dean of St Patrick's; lest, while it is employed to dispel the gloom, that by investing the shrine of these demons conceals their deformity, it should be permitted to dart sacrilegious fire into the neighbouring sanctuary of religion.

Gallantry (by which I here understand those generous and respectful attentions we pay to the Fair Sex) contributes in many ways both to the *copiousness* and to the *refine-*

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ment of wit and humour. Nor is there evidence, that this mode of politeneſs at all ſubſiſted in Greece or Rome, at leaſt in its preſent form. There, the women, ſecluded from general converſation, were known only by their domeſtic virtues, or by crimes that expoſed them to public abhorrence; while the nicer diſcriminations of the female character, which ſupply materials for comic writing, were little attended to:—nor could they, in that ſequeſtered condition, ever arrive at thoſe improvements in taſte, addreſs, and delicacy, which may be communicated by modern education, and which in a modern youth may excite a purer and more intereſting attachment than ever animated a Greek or Roman lover. In fact, there is nothing in modern manners more characteriſtical than this Gallantry, and few things that would ſurpriſe an ancient more. It beſpeaks, on the part of the men, a mixture, of tenderneſs and reſpect, of deference and eſteem, which the politeſt gallant of antiquity never thought of; and of familiarity and reſerve, confidence and caution, on the part of the women, which the Greek and Roman ladies, confined to the ſociety of their own ſex, and intimidated by a rigorous economy that rendered their ſtate little better than ſervitude, could have neither inclination nor opportunity to acquire.

The old Germans, (as we learn from Tacitus

citus *); and those warriors of the north who invaded the Roman empire, were on all occasions attended by their women; whom, if they did not love with romantic fondness, they esteemed for their friendly counsels and faithful service, and sometimes considered as oracles, by whom the gods gave intimation of future events †. But in the more genial regions

* Tacitus, De moribus Germanorum. — Thucydides was of opinion, that she is the best woman, of whom there is least speech, either to her praise or dispraise; and that the name of a lady of honour ought always, like her body, to be kept at home, and never permitted to go abroad. This doctrine, which conveys no comfortable idea of the Grecian economy in regard to the Fair Sex, is warmly controverted by the gallant and good-natured Plutarch; who, in his treatise of the virtues of women, contends, "that virtue always deserves honour wherever it is found, but especially when it is the work of a feeble agent; and that, therefore, female virtue is peculiarly worthy of praise, that not only their own sex, but men also, may profit by the example."— Many female characters of high virtue are indeed celebrated by ancient historians and poets; and innumerable testimonies in their favour might be cited from the Greek and Roman authors. Yet still the general treatment of women at Rome, but especially in Greece, was such as we should not scruple to call tyrannical and cruel; partaking much of the Asiatic severity, little of the Gothic and German confidence, and nothing at all of the liberality, gentleness, and affectionate homage, of modern gallantry.

† I know not, whether it proceeded from the respect the northern nations paid their women, or to what other cause it was owing; but it is surely very singular, and what, on Mr Harris's principles, (see *Hermes*, p. 45.), could

regions of Asia, the sexes lived on a very different footing. Without a grain of esteem on either side, the men regarded the women with sentiments of untender, though passionate love; and the women, secluded from public view, and cut off from the means of rational improvement, were insipid and submissive, as slaves must be under the rod of tyranny. Modern gallantry comprehends every thing that is agreeable in these two modes of domestic intercourse; avoiding the slavish and unmanly principles of the latter, and whatever savours of harshness in the former. With all due regard to external charms, it is still more sensible of moral and intellectual beauty; and while it favours the enthusiasm, and disavows the jealousy, of the enamoured Asiatic, it exalts and refines those sentiments of rational esteem which we inherit from our free-born ancestors of the north. In a word, the superiority, vested by law in the male sex, is now amply compensated to the female, by that tender complaisance, with which they are treated in all polite nations; and which, from the use they make of it in improving society, and enlivening conversation, it appears that they so justly deserve.

could not be easily accounted for, that in the Saxon and some other northern languages, the Sun should be of the feminine gender, and the Moon masculine. See Hickes's Thesaurus.

Is

Is it not obvious, that this gallantry tends to enlarge the ſphere of Comic writing? By admitting us to the converſation of the fair ſex, it brings us acquainted with an entire claſs of characters, wherein, though we muſt diſcern every ſort of human excellence, we may alſo trace out (ſince nothing ſublunary is perfect) a variety of thoſe little faults and abſurdities, which Ariſtotle, had he known them, would have allowed to be fit objects of Comic Ridicule. But neither Ariſtotle, nor any other ancient, can vie with the moderns, in knowledge of the female character. We ſee nothing of it, or next to nothing, in the comedies or ſatires of Greece and Rome. Whereas, in the writings of Fielding, Young, Pope, and Shakeſpeare, not to mention the French and Italian authors, the freaks and foibles of the female world ſupply a rich fund of humorous entertainment.

Further: Conſidering the form of intercourſe now ſubſiſting between the ſexes, ſo different from that which anciently prevailed, and their different purſuits and accompliſhments thence reſulting; is there not reaſon to ſuppoſe, that the paſſions wherewith they inſpire each other ſhould alſo be different? Romantic Love ſeems to be almoſt peculiar to the latter ages. This paſſion may perhaps be traced up to that ſpirit of courteſy and adventure which aroſe from circumſtances peculiar to feudal government, diſtinguiſhed all the inſtitutions of chivalry,

gave birth and form to the old romance, and consequently to the new, and to this day influences in a perceptible degree the customs and manners of Europe. More delicate and more generous than the Greek or Roman loves, this passion is also more interesting, and may of course be presumed to be more powerful. Shakespeare, and the author of Robinson Cruso, have indeed shown, that even in modern times this passion is not essential, either in tragedy or in romance, to form an affecting fable: but the generality of late writers, if we may judge of their opinions by their practice, seem to think otherwise; and that to every sort of fictitious narrative, from an Epic poem to a Pastoral, from Amadis de Gaul to the last published novel, a love-story is as ornamental and necessary, as leaves to a tree, or a mistress to a knight-errant.

As romantic love in its natural and regular procedure, is now become so copious a source of joy and sorrow, hope and fear, triumph and disappointment, we might reasonably conclude, that in its more whimsical forms and vagaries it could scarce fail to supply materials for laughter. And that this is the case, nobody in the least acquainted with modern life or modern literature needs be informed. I mention not its laughable extravagancies, as they appear in Don Quixote, Sir Roger de Coverley, and other heroes on record; and far be it from me to specify on this

this occasion any of the various forms of female prudery and coquetry, of which I always think with the most profound reverence. But the reader would wonder at me, if I did not remark, that to affectations and follies, which I fear are imputable to this gentle passion, we owe an endless train of fops, coxcombs, beaus, male coquets, cicisbeos, and danglers; a breed of animals unknown to the ancients; and which, if they were but as harmless as they are contemptible, might be allowed to rank with the most ridiculous things on the face of the earth.

Other causes for the superior copiousness of modern ridicule I shall only hint at; as illustration is not necessary to render their effects obvious to the reader.

We have a far greater variety of authors to allude to, in the way of parody and burlesque, than the ancients had; for we have both ancient authors and modern: and to an excessive admiration of the former some late wits have ascribed the origin of a new species of ludicrous character, whereof we have several strong outlines in the travelling physician in Peregrine Pickle, and a finished portrait in the Memoirs of Martinus Scribblerus. There was indeed, in the days of Horace *, a sort of character not unlike this;

* Hor. Epist. ad Augustum, vers. 19. — 27.

a set of critics, who, despising the literary productions of their own time, were perpetually extolling the ancient Roman authors, and tracing out divine beauties of style in writings that were become almost unintelligible. But these critics are rather to be ranked with those of our antiquarians who prefer Chaucer and Langland to Dryden and Milton, and, like Pope's Parish-clerk, take a kindly affection even to the black letter in which the former are printed. The taste of such men may be singular; but as their labours are often highly useful in illustrating ancient history, it would not be possible, without violent misrepresentation, to make them so ridiculous, as Pope and Arbuthnot have made the elder and younger Scriblerus.

It may also be remarked, that our customs in regard to dress change more frequently than the Greek or Roman did. Whether this be owing to our improvements in commerce, and superior zeal for varieties of manufacture, or to a bad taste in dress, which must always be changing, because it has no fixed principle; or to the influence of the feudal manners; or to the luxuries peculiar to opulent monarchy, — I do not now inquire: — but a certain fact it is, that the Greek and Roman dresses were in a great degree permanent, while ours are liable to endless variety and alteration. A circumstance this, that may at first view seem unconnected with the present subject; but to which the admirers of

of the Rape of the Lock, Spectator, and Tatler, are indebted for ſome of the fineſt humour that ever was written.

Commerce, and all the arts connected with it, are more ſucceſsfully cultivated by modern, than they were by ancient nations. Hence a variety of new employments, which, by dividing mankind into ſeparate profeſſions and ſocieties, multiply human characters, and enlarge the ſphere of humour. And hence, as was obſerved, an infinite number of new objects and ideas, that extend the bounds of wit, by ſuggeſting new ſources of compariſon, and ludicrous arrangement. ——The art of Printing, too, by diffuſing literature, has made the characters of mankind better known, and raiſed up a greater variety of authors, whoſe different purſuits and adventures yield materials for that mode of ludicrous writing, in which the Dunciad may be conſidered as the moſt capital performance.

To a full examination of the preſent topic, it would be further neceſſary, to give a critical analyſis of our moſt celebrated works in wit and humour, and of the human characters diſplayed in them; and to inquire, from what external cauſes the laughable peculiarities in each character ariſe; and how far the ſame or ſimilar cauſes could take place in ancient times. But this I leave as a theme to amuſe the leiſure of future critics; and ſhall conclude with a remark or two on the ſuperior REFINEMENT of modern ridicule.

II. If

II. If modern ridicule be more *copious* than the ancient, of which there seems to be sufficient proof, it must also, according to the natural progress of things, be more *refined*. For, as was hinted already, the more conversant we are among pleasurable objects of any particular class, the more sagacious we become in estimating their comparative excellence, and our taste of course becomes more delicate. When a savage or clown sees a picture for the first time, his wonder is raised to the highest pitch, even tho' the merit of the piece be but small: — he never beheld any thing so admirable; he can conceive nothing beyond it. Make him gradually acquainted with a number of pictures, and engage him to fix his attention upon each, and you shall see him of his own accord begin to form comparisons; to discover beauties in one, which are not in another, or not in the same degree; and at last, perhaps, to find out imperfections in the best, and to conceive something in the art still better than he has ever seen. —— Homely jokes delight the vulgar, because their knowledge of ludicrous combination is limited. Let this knowledge be extended; let them hear varieties of conversation, or read the works of witty authors, and their taste will improve of itself: and those jokes will at length appear despicable, which formerly they mistook for excellent. That the humour of Addison and Pope should be more refined than that of Lucian and

and Horace, that Swift ſhould be more delicate than Rabelais, and Foote than Ariſtophanes, is therefore not more ſurpriſing, than that the man of obſervation, who has made the tour of Europe, ſhould be a better judge of elegance in building and furniture, than he who has never travelled beyond the frontier of his native province.

But, if this progreſs towards perfection of taſte hold univerſally, why, it may be ſaid, do not we excel the ancients in our taſte of books and writing in general; ſince it is plain, that in this reſpect alſo we have more experience than they? I anſwer; If all the books we have, the new as well as old, had been written in a good taſte, and we as attentive readers as the ancients were, it is not abſurd to ſuppoſe, that our taſte in writing might have been more perfect than theirs. But we have ſuch numbers of books to read, and ſo many of them trifling, and ſo many unſkilfully written, that we are apt to loſe the habit of attentive ſtudy, and even to contract a liking to inelegant or faulty compoſition. For inattention long indulged ſettles into a habit; and the ſame ſuſceptibility of nature, which in time reconciles ſome men to the reliſh of tobacco and ſtrong liquors, may alſo gradually admit a depravation in the mental taſte of thoſe to whom deformity and impropriety have long been familiar. ——I ſuppoſed the clown, the ſavage, and the traveller, attentive to what they ſaw; and

I did not ſuppoſe every thing they ſaw to be bad in its kind. Had every thing been bad, or they inattentive, it would have been impoſſible for them, in the caſe I mentioned, ever to acquire a taſte in painting, building, or furniture: and were a man never to hear any but coarſe and vulgar jokes, I queſtion whether his taſte in ridicule would ever improve, though he were to hear them by hundreds and thouſands every day. —— And therefore I admit, that the progreſs above mentioned, towards perfection of taſte, holds, not univerſally, but only in certain circumſtances; and that the ſuperior *refinement* of modern ridicule cannot be accounted for, from its ſuperior *copiouſneſs*, unleſs we can prove it to have received cultivation from the influence of other cauſes peculiar to the condition of men in modern times.

And, in order to prove this, I obſerve, ſecondly, That what we call the point of honour (though in many reſpects blameable) has, in conjunction with a ſpirit of courteſy derived from the ſame Feudal origin, tended greatly in theſe latter times to check intemperate paſſion, and regulate human ſpeech. And nothing, perhaps, has more effectually ſoftened converſation, by diſcountenancing indelicacy, and by promoting good humour, gentle manners, and a deſire to pleaſe, than the ſociety of the fair ſex; an acquiſition whereof neither the ſages of Greece and Rome, nor the voluptuaries of Aſia, ever

knew the value; and for which Europe is indebted to the refinements peculiar to modern gallantry. Nor is it only by ſtudying to avoid whatever might be offenſive to female delicacy, that we derive improvement from our amiable partners in ſocial life. They ſet us an example, from which it is our own fault if we receive no benefit. The liveline ſs of their fancy, the purity of their taſte, and the unſtudied eaſe of their elocution, give to modern converſation an elegance and a variety, which the Socratic ſchool itſelf would have been proud to take for a model.

My third remark is, That political inſtitutions have alſo an effect on ludicrous writing, as on every thing elſe in which that political creature Man is concerned. The mirth of a ſavage, when he gives way to it, is mere madneſs; as his ſorrow approaches for the moſt part to deſpair. But ſavages are little addicted to jocularity: their looks, their ſongs, and their muſic are ſolemn; they are continually engroſſed by emotions more powerful than this of laughter;—a neceſſary effect of their violent temper, and of their needy and perilous condition. Wit and humour, and thoſe nicer improvements of ſpeech that miniſter to pleaſure rather than neceſſity, ſeldom appear among a people, till public peace be tolerably ſecure. And as monarchy is, of all governments, the leaſt liable to either external aſſault, or inteſtine commotion, and leaves the ſubject moſt at leiſure

for both private buſineſs and private amuſement; it would ſeem of courſe more favourable to every ſpecies of *comic* writing, than any of the republican forms; in which important affairs, and conſequently important emotions, muſt ever be preſent to the ſober-minded citizen. And where perſons of all ranks, and thoſe ranks very different, often meet in ſociety, and the public welfare depends on their living on good terms with one another, each within the ſphere of his own prerogative, (a ſtate of things not to be looked for in Democracy or Deſpotiſm, but very compatible with limited monarchy), — politeneſs of behaviour muſt needs take place; while the great find it for their intereſt to pleaſe the people; and the people, to recommend themſelves to the favour of the great. This general politeneſs, which is one diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of monarchy, and which the example of a court is alone ſufficient to make faſhionable, muſt ever be unfriendly to rudeneſs of ſpeech, and muſt therefore refine wit and humour, while it poliſhes converſation. Now it is obſervable, that in modern times Monarchy gives the law to thoſe parts of the world that aſpire to a literary character, as Republican government did of old. Does not this, added to the former conſideration, account in ſome meaſure for the ſuperior refinement of the modern wit and humour?

And now, notwithſtanding the levity of many

many of these remarks, and the unintereſting title prefixed to them, may we not be permitted to obſerve in concluſion, that the meek and benevolent ſpirit of our religion has had a powerful influence in ſweetening and refining all the comforts of human ſociety, and Converſation among the reſt? — That humility, gentleneſs, and kind affection, whereof good-breeding ever aſſumes the outward form, does not Chriſtianity eſtabliſh in the heart as a permanent principle of indiſpenſable obligation? That generous love of humankind, which prompts the Chriſtian to watch for the good of others, and embrace every opportunity of promoting, not only their welfare, but their virtue, taking care never to offend, and avoiding even the appearance of evil, — would not the man of taſte acknowledge to be the very perfection and heroiſm of polite behaviour? Muſt not the affecting view that true religion exhibits, of all mankind bearing to one another the relation of brethren, impart keenneſs and activity to thoſe tender ſympathies of our ſocial nature, whereof the language of good-breeding is ſo remarkably expreſſive? Chriſtianity commands, not the ſuppreſſion only, but the extinction, of every indelicate thought, arrogant emotion, and malevolent purpoſe: — would converſation ſtand in need of any further refinement, if this law were as punctually fulfilled, as it is earneſtly recommended? What is more efficacious,

than habitual good-humour, in rendering the intercourſe of ſociety agreeable, and in keeping at a diſtance all intemperate paſſion, and all harſhneſs of ſentiment and language? — and of what religion, but the Chriſtian, can we ſay with truth, that it ſupplies, in every ſtate of human affairs, a perpetual ſource of inward conſolation? In a word, true Chriſtianity, alone and at once, transforms a barbarian into a man; a brutal, ſelfiſh, and melancholy ſavage, into a kind, a generous, and a chearful aſſociate.

Will it be ſaid, that delicacy of ſpeech and behaviour may be communicated and acquired by the means recommended in ſome late LETTERS, namely, by external applications, and by the uſe of certain mechanical phraſes, looks, and geſtures? As well may the painting of the cheeks and eye-brows be preſcribed as a preſervative from the rheumatiſm, and perfumed ſnuff as an antidote againſt hunger and thirſt. He has learned little of the true intereſts of human ſociety, and nothing at all of the human mind, who does not know, that without ſincerity there could not be either happineſs or comfort upon earth; that permanent propriety of conduct has its ſource in the heart; and that, if all men believed one another to be knaves and hypocrites, politeneſs of language and attitude, inſtead of being graceful, would appear as ridiculous, as the chatter of a parrot, or the grin of a monkey. Who, that has the

the ſpirit of a man, could take pleaſure in profeſſions of good-will, which he knew to be inſincere? Who, that is not conſcious of ſome baſeneſs in himſelf, could ſeriouſly imagine, that mankind in general might be rendered ſuſceptible of ſuch pleaſure? I ſpeak not now of the immorality of that new ſyſtem; which, if I were inclined to ſay of it what I think, would give deeper, as well as louder, tones to my language: I ſpeak only of its abſurdity and folly. And abſurd, and fooliſh, in the extreme, as well as wicked, muſt every ſyſtem be, that aims to disjoin delicacy from virtue, or virtue from religion.

Let us not imagine, becauſe the influence of religion is not ſo powerful as it ought to be, that therefore it is not powerful at all. What human creatures would have been at this day, if the light of the goſpel had not yet ariſen upon the earth, we cannot poſitively tell: but were this a proper place for explaining the ground of ſuch a conjecture, I think I could demonſtrate the reaſonableneſs of ſuppoſing, that they muſt have been, beyond all compariſon, more wretched than they are. At a time, when it was debaſed by the moſt lamentable ſuperſtitions, religion taught courteſy and ſoberneſs to the ſons of chivalry: a circumſtance whereof the ſalutary effects are ſtill diſcernible in the manners of Europe. How much greater may we preſume its efficacy to be in theſe days, when it is taught in its purity, and may be underſtood

ſtood by all! — But infidels, it may be objected, are as eminent for polite behaviour, as believers. Granting this to be true, which however it is impoſſible to prove, I would only deſire thoſe, who ſecond the objection, to conſider, whether the preſent ſyſtem of politeneſs aroſe among infidels or Chriſtians; whether it would have ariſen at all, if paganiſm had continued to prevail; whether ſeveral of its diſtiguiſhing characters be not derived from the Chriſtian religion; whether the light of reaſon, unaided by the radiance of the goſpel, would have diſpelled ſo ſoon that night of intellectual darkneſs which followed the ſubverſion of the Roman empire: — and, laſtly, whether it be not prudent for a few individuals (unbelievers being ſtill, as I truſt, the ſmaller number in theſe parts of the world) to conform to the manners of the many, eſpecially when thoſe manners are univerſally felt and acknowledged to be more agreeable than any other. The influence of true religion, in humanizing ſociety, and refining converſation, is indeed very great. And if ſo, I could not, conſiſtently with my preſent plan, overlook it. Nor is it, in my opinion, poſſible for a philoſopher, unleſs blinded by ignorance, checked by timidity, or led aſtray by prejudice, to enter into any inquiry relating either to morals or to manners, without paying ſome tribute of praiſe to that Divine Inſtitution.

THE END.

REMARKS

ON THE UTILITY OF

CLASSICAL LEARNING.

Ego multos homines excellenti animo ac virtute fuisse, et sine doctrina, naturæ ipsius habitu prope divino, per seipsos et moderatos, et graves, extitisse fateor. Etiam illud adjungo, sæpius ad laudem atque virtutem naturam sine doctrina, quam sine natura valuisse doctrinam. Atque idem ego contendo, cum ad naturam eximiam atque illustrem accesserit ratio quædam conformatioque doctrinæ, tum illud nescio quid præclarum ac singulare solere existere. — Quod si non hic tantus fructus ostenderetur, et si ex his studiis delectatio sola peteretur; tamen, ut opinor, hanc animi remissionem humanissimam ac liberatissimam judicaretis. — Hæc studia adolescentiam alunt, senectutem oblectant, secundas res ornant, adversis perfugium ac solatium præbent, delectant domi, non impediunt foris, pernoctant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur.

Cicero pro Archia, cap. 7.

REMARKS

ON THE UTILITY OF

CLASSICAL LEARNING

Written in the year 1769.

THE calumniators of the Greek and Roman Learning have not been few in theſe latter times. Perrault, La Motte, and Teraſſon, arraigned the taſte of the ancients; and Des Cartes and Malebranche affected to deſpiſe their philoſophy. Yet it ſeemed to be allowed in general, that the ſtudy of the Claſſic Authors was a neceſſary part of polite education. This, however, has of late been not only queſtioned, but denied: and it has been ſaid, that every thing worth preſerving of ancient literature might be more eaſily tranſmitted, both to us and to poſterity, through the channel of the modern languages, than through that of the Greek and Latin. On this ſubject, ſeveral ſlight eſſays have been written; the authors of which ſeem to think, that the human mind, being now arrived at

maturity, may safely be left to itself; and that the Classic authors, those great instructors of former times, are become an incumbrance to the more sprightly genius of the present.

"For who, that is an adept in the philo-
"sophy of Locke and Newton, can have any
"need of Aristotle? What useful precept
"of the Socratic school has been overlook-
"ed by modern moralists? Is not Geome-
"try as fairly, and as fully displayed in the
"French and English tongues, as in the un-
"known dialects of Archimedes, Apollo-
"nius, and Euclid? Why have recourse
"to Demosthenes and Cicero, for examples
"in an art, which Massillon, Bourdaloue,
"and the French academicians, (to say no-
"thing of the orators of our own country),
"have carried to perfection? Are we not
"taught by Voltaire and his Editors, who,
"though ignorant of Greek, are well read
"in Madam Dacier's translations, that Tasso
"is a better poet than Homer; and that the
"sixth and seventh cantoes of the Henriade
"are alone more valuable than the whole
"Iliad *? What Dramatic poet of anti-
"quity is to be compared with the immortal
"Shakespeare? what satirist with Pope, who
"to all the fire and elevation of Juvenal,
"joins the wit, the taste, and sententious
"morality, of Horace? As to criticism:

* See Le Vicende della Literatura, pag. 166.

"is

" is there in Ariſtotle, Dionyſius, Cicero, " Quintilian, or Longinus, any thing that " is not more philoſophically explained, and " better illuſtrated by examples, in the wri- " tings of Dacier, Rollin, Fenelon, Dryden, " and Addiſon? —— And then, how deba- " ſing to an ingenuous mind is the drudgery " and diſcipline of our public ſchools! " That the beſt days of youth ſhould be em- " bittered by confinement, amidſt the gloom " of ſolitude, or under the ſcourge of ty- " ranny; and all for no purpoſe, but that " the memory may be loaded with the words " of two languages that have been dead up- " wards of a thouſand years: — is it not an " abſurdity too groſs to admit of exaggera- " tion? To ſee a youth of ſpirit hanging " over a muſty folio, his cheek pale with " watching, his brow furrowed with un- " timely wrinkles, his health gone, and eve- " ry power of his ſoul enervated with an- " xiety, and ſtupified with poring upon tri- " fles, — what blood boils not with indig- " nation, what heart melts not with ſorrow! " And then the pedant, juſt broken looſe " from his cell, briſtling all o'er with Greek, " and puff'd with pride," as Boileau ſays; " his head ſo full of words, that no room is " left for ideas; his accompliſhments ſo high- " ly prized by himſelf, as to be intolerable " to others; ignorant of the hiſtory, and " untouched with the intereſts, of his na- " tive country; — what an uſeleſs, what an

" odious animal! Who will ſay that edu-
" cation is on a right footing, while its ten-
" dency is, to create ſuch a monſter! ——
" Ye parents, liſten, and be wiſe. Would
" you have your children healthy, and po-
" lite, and *ſentimental?* Let their early
" youth be employed in genteel exerciſes;
" the theatre, the coffeehouſe, and the card-
" table, will refine their taſte, inſtruct them
" in public affairs, and produce habits of
" attention and contrivance; and the French
" authors will make them men of wit and
" ſprightly converſation, and give a certain
" *je ne ſçai quoi* of elegance to their whole
" behaviour: — but for Greek and Latin,
" the ſtudy of Gronovius, Scaliger, and
" Burman, the accompliſhment of Dutch
" commentators and Jeſuits; — heavens!
" what has a man of faſhion to do with
" it!"

Moſt of the diſcourſes I have heard or read on this ſide of the queſtion were in a ſimilar ſtyle of vague declamation, ſeaſoned with high encomiums on the utility and elegance of the French language and literature, and on the late diſcoveries in phyſiology for which we cannot be ſaid to be indebted to any of the ſages of Greece and Rome. And how eaſy is it to declaim on ſuch a topic! By blending ſome truth with your falſehood; by giving to the latter the air of harmleſs amplification, and by deſcanting on the abuſes of ſtudy, as if they were its natural conſequences,

ſequences, you may compoſe a very plauſible harangue; ſuch as could not be fully anſwered without greater waſte of time and patience, than the champion of antiquity would think it worth his while to beſtow. And if your doctrine happens to flatter the prejudices, the vanity, or the indolence of the age, you will be regarded by ſome as a fine writer, of liberal principles, and a manly ſpirit.

It is however thought by many, who in my opinion are more competent judges, that an early acquaintance with the claſſics is the only foundation of good learning, and that it is incumbent on all who direct the ſtudies of youth, to have this great object continually before them, as a matter of the moſt ſerious concern; for that a good taſte in literature is friendly both to public and to private virtue, and of courſe tends to promote in no inconſiderable degree the glory of a nation; and that as the ancients are more or leſs underſtood, the principles and the ſpirit of ſound erudition will ever be found to flouriſh or decay. I ſhall therefore ſtate as briefly as poſſible ſome of the peculiar advantages that ſeem to me to accompany this ſort of ſtudy; with a view to obviate, if I can, certain prejudices, which I am ſorry to obſerve have of late years been gaining ground, at leaſt in the northern part of this iſland. The ſubject is copious; but I doubt whether thoſe adverſaries to whom I now addreſs myſelf would

would take the trouble to read a long dissertation.

The objections that are most commonly made to the study of the Greek and Latin authors, may perhaps be reduced to four. It is said, first, "that this mode of education "obliges the student to employ too much "time in the acquisition of words: — se- "condly, that when he has acquired these "languages, he does not find, that they re- "pay his toil: — thirdly, that the studies "of a Grammar-school have a tendency to "encumber the genius, and consequently to "weaken, rather than improve, the human "mind: — and, lastly, that the classic au- "thors contain many descriptions and doc- "trines that may seduce the understanding, "inflame the passions, and corrupt the "heart."

1. In answer to the first objection, I would observe, that the plan of study must be very bad, where the student's health is hurt by too close application. Some parents and teachers have thought, that the proficiency of the scholar must be in proportion to the number of hours he employs in conning his task: but that is a great mistake. Experience proves, that three or four hours a-day, properly employed in the grammar-school, have a better effect than nine; and are sufficient to lay within a few years a good foundation of classical knowledge. Dunces, it is true, would require more time; but

but dunces have nothing to do with Greek and Latin: For ſtudies that yield neither delight nor improvement are not only ſuperfluous but hurtful; becauſe they miſemploy thoſe faculties which nature had deſtined to other purpoſes. At the ſame time, therefore, that young men are proſecuting their grammatical ſtudies, they may learn writing, drawing, arithmetic, and the principles of geometry; and may devote the intervals of leiſure to riding, fencing, dancing, and other manly exerciſes. Idleneſs is the greateſt misfortune incident to early years; the diſtempers it breeds in the ſoul are numberleſs and incurable. And where children, during their hours of relaxation, are left at their own diſpoſal, they too often make choice of criminal amuſement and bad company. At Sparta, the youth were continually under the inſpection of thoſe who had authority over them; their education, ſays Plutarch, was one continued exerciſe of obedience: but it was never ſaid, that the Spartan youth became torpid, or melancholy, or ſickly, from want of amuſement. Wherever there is a ſchool, there ought to be, and generally is, a field or area for diverſions; and if the hours that boys in this country ſpend with one another, that is, in ſauntering, and too often in gaming, quarrelling, and ſwearing, were to be devoted to exerciſe, under the eye of ſome perſon of prudence, their ſouls and bodies would both be the better

better for it; and a great deal of time left for the ſtudy of many branches of knowledge, beſides what is contained in the grammar, and ancient authors. The misfortune is, that we allot too much of their time, not to play, but to idleneſs; and hence it happens, that their claſſical ſtudies interfere with other neceſſary parts of education. But certain it is, that their ſtudies and amuſements might be made perfectly conſiſtent; and the culture of the mind promoted at the ſame time with that of the body. If both theſe ends are not always accompliſhed, and but ſeldom purſued, the blame is to be laid, neither on the teacher, nor on the things that are taught, but on thoſe perſons only who have the power of reforming our ſchool-diſcipline, and want the inclination. At any rate, the blame cannot be laid on the Claſſic Authors, or on thoſe very uſeful members of a commonwealth, the compilers of grammars and dictionaries. For the faculties of children might be diſſipated by idleneſs, their manners poiſoned by bad company, or their health impaired by injudicious confinement, though Greek and Latin were annihilated.

2. It is another abuſe of ſtudy, when the hours of attendance in a grammar-ſchool are all employed in the acquiſition of words. If a child find nothing but words in the old authors, it muſt be owing to the ſtupifying influence of an ignorant teacher. The moſt in-

tereſting part of profane hiſtory is delivered by the writers of Greece and Rome. From them alſo we may learn the pureſt precepts of uninſpired morality, delivered in the moſt enchanting language, illuſtrated by the happieſt alluſions, and enforced by the moſt pertinent examples, and moſt emphatical reaſoning. Whatever is amuſive and inſtructive in fable, whatever in deſcription is beautiful, or in compoſition harmonious, whatever can ſoothe or awaken the human paſſions, the Greek and Roman authors have carried to perfection. That children ſhould enter into all theſe beauties, is not to be imagined; but that they may be made to comprehend them ſo far as to be improved and delighted in a high degree, admits of no doubt. Together with the words, therefore, of theſe two celebrated languages, they may learn, without any additional expence of time, the principles of hiſtory, morality, politics, geography, and criticiſm; which, when taught in a foreign dialect, will perhaps be found to leave a deeper impreſſion upon the memory, than when explained in the mother tongue. The young ſtudent ſhould be equally attentive to the phraſeology and to the ſubject of his leſſon; and receive directions for analyſing the one, as well as for conſtruing the other. He ought to read his authors, firſt as a grammarian, ſecondly as a philoſopher, and laſtly as a critic; and all this he may do without difficulty, and with delight as

well as profit, if care is taken to proportion his taſk to his years and capacity. Nor let it be ſuppoſed, that the firſt principles of grammar are more intelligible to a young mind, than the rudiments of philoſophy and rhetoric. In matters within their ſphere, do we not find that children can diſtinguiſh between truth and falſehood; perceive the connection of cauſes and effects; infer an obvious concluſion from plain premiſes, and even make experiments upon nature for the regulation of their own conduct? And if in muſic, and drawing, and penmanſhip, and phraſeology, the taſte of a child is improvable, why not in compoſition and ſtyle, the cadence of periods, and the harmony of verſe, probability of fable, and accuracy of deſcription? The more we attend to an author's ſubject, the greater proficiency we ſhall always make in his language. To underſtand the ſubject well, it is neceſſary to ſtudy the words and their connection with a critical eye; whereas, even when his knowledge of the words is very ſuperficial, a ſcholar or tutor, who attends to nothing elſe, may think himſelf ſufficiently acquainted with the author's meaning. The mere Grammatical teacher will never be found to have any true taſte for his author: if he had, it would be impoſſible for him to confine himſelf to verbal remarks: he muſt give ſcope to his admiration or diſguſt, if he really feel thoſe paſſions; and muſt therefore communicate

nicate to the pupil ſome portion of his own enthuſiaſm or ſagacity.

3. The mental faculties of children ſtand as much in need of improvement, and conſequently of exerciſe, as their bodily powers. Nor is it of ſmall importance to deviſe ſome mode of diſcipline for fixing their attention. When this is not done, they become thoughtleſs and diſſipated to a degree that often unfits them for the buſineſs of life.

The Greeks and Romans had a juſt ſenſe of the value of this part of education. The youth of Sparta, when their more violent exerciſes were over, employed themſelves in works of ſtratagem; which in a ſtate, where wealth and avarice were unknown, could hardly be carried to any criminal exceſs. When they met together for converſation, their minds were continually exerted in judging of the morality of actions, and the expediency of public meaſures of government; or in bearing with temper, and retorting with ſpirit, the ſarcaſms of good-natured raillery. They were obliged to expreſs themſelves, without heſitation, in the feweſt and plaineſt words poſſible. Theſe inſtitutions muſt have made them thoughtful, and attentive, and obſervant both of men and things. And accordingly, their good ſenſe, and penetration, and their nervous and ſententious ſtyle, were no leſs the admiration of Greece, than their ſobriety, patriotiſm, and invincible courage. For the talent of

saying what we call *good things* they were eminent among all the nations of antiquity. As they never piqued themselves on their rhetorical powers, it was prudent to accustom the youth to silence and few words. It made them modest and thoughtful. With us very sprightly children sometimes become very dull men. For we are apt to reckon those children the sprightliest, who talk the most: and as it is not easy for them to think and talk at the same time, the natural effect of their too much speaking is too little thinking. — At Athens, the youth were made to study their own language with accuracy both in the pronunciation and composition; and the meanest of the people valued themselves upon their attainments in this way. Their orators must have had a very difficult part to act, when by the slightest impropriety they ran the hazard of disgusting the whole audience: and we shall not wonder at the extraordinary effects produced by the harangues of Demosthenes, or the extraordinary care wherewith those harangues were composed, when we recollect, that the minutest beauty in his performance must have been perceived and felt by every one of his hearers. It has been matter of surprise to some, that Cicero, who had so true a relish for the severe simplicity of the Athenian orator, should himself in his orations have adopted a style so diffuse and declamatory. But Cicero knew what he did. He had a people to deal with, who,

who, compared with the Athenians, might be called illiterate *; and to whom Demoſthenes would have appeared as cold and unintereſting, as Cicero would have ſeemed pompous and inflated to the people of Athens. In every part of learning the Athenians were ſtudious to excel. Rhetoric in all its branches was to them an object of principal conſideration. From the ſtory of Socrates we may learn, that the literary ſpirit was keener at Athens, even in that corrupted age, than at any period in any other country. If a perſon of mean condition, and of the loweſt fortune, with the talents and temper of Socrates, were now to appear, inculcating virtue, diſſuading from vice, and recommending a right uſe of reaſon, not with the grimace of an enthuſiaſt, or the rant of a declaimer, but with good humour, plain language, and ſound argument, we cannot ſuppoſe, that the youth of high rank would pay him much attention in any part of Europe. As a juggler, gambler, or atheiſt, he might perhaps attract their notice, and have the honour to do no little miſchief in ſome of our clubs of young worthies; but from virtue and modeſty, clothed in rags, I fear they would not willingly receive

* Cicero himſelf acknowledges, that many of the Romans were very incompetent judges of rhetorical merit. — Hæc turba et barbaria forenſis dat locum vel vitioſiſſimis oratoribus. De Orat. lib. 1. § 118.

improvement. — The education of the Romans, from the time they began to aſpire to a literary character, was ſimilar to that of the Athenians. The children were taught to ſpeak their own language with purity, and made to ſtudy and tranſlate the Greek authors. The laws of the twelve tables they committed to memory. And as the talent of public ſpeaking was not only ornamental, but even a neceſſary qualification, to every man who wiſhed to diſtinguiſh himſelf in a civil or military capacity, all the youth were ambitious to acquire it. The ſtudy of the law was alſo a matter of general concern. Even the children uſed, in their diverſions, to imitate the procedure of public trials; one accuſing, and another defending, the ſuppoſed criminal: and the youth, and many of the moſt reſpectable ſtateſmen, through the whole of their lives, allotted part of their leiſure to the exerciſe of declaiming on ſuch topics as might come to be debated in the forum, in the ſenate, or before the judges. Their domeſtic diſcipline was very ſtrict. Some ancient matron, of approved virtue, was appointed to ſuperintend the children in their earlieſt years; before whom every thing criminal in word or deed was avoided as a heinous enormity. This venerable perſon was careful both to inſtil good principles into her pupils, and alſo to regulate their amuſements, and, by preſerving their minds pure from moral turpitude,

pitude, and intellectual depravation, to prepare them for the ſtudy of the liberal arts and ſciences. — It may alſo be remarked, that the Greeks and Romans were more accurate ſtudents than the moderns are. They had few books, and thoſe they had were not eaſily come at: what they read, therefore, they read thoroughly. I know not, whether their way of writing and making up their volumes, as it rendered the peruſal more difficult, might not alſo occaſion a more durable remembrance. From their converſation-pieces, and other writings, it appears, that they had a ſingular facility in quoting their favourite authors. Demoſthenes is ſaid to have tranſcribed Thucydides eight times, and to have got a great part of him by heart. This is a degree of accuracy which the greater part of modern readers have no notion of. We ſeem to think it more creditable to read many books ſuperficially, than to read a few good ones with care; and yet it is certain, that by the latter method we ſhould cultivate our faculties, and increaſe our ſtock of real knowledge, more effectually, and perhaps more ſpeedily, than we can do by the former, which indeed tends rather to bewilder the mind, than to improve it. Every man, who pretends to a literary character, muſt now read a number of books, whether well or ill written, whether inſtructive or inſignificant, merely that he may have it to ſay, that he has read them. And therefore I am

apt

apt to think, that, in general, the Greeks and Romans muſt have been more improved by their reading, than we are by ours. As books multiply, knowledge is more widely diffuſed; but if human wiſdom were to increaſe in the ſame proportion, what children would the ancients be, in compariſon of the moderns! of whom every ſubſcriber to the circulating liberary would have it in his power to be wiſer than Socrates, and more accompliſhed than Julius Ceſar!

I mention theſe particulars of the Greek and Roman diſcipline, in order to ſhow, that, although the ancients had not ſo many languages to ſtudy as we have, nor ſo many books to read, they were however careful, that the faculties of their children ſhould neither languiſh for want of exerciſe, nor be exhauſted in frivolous employment. As we have not thought fit to imitate them in this; as moſt of the children of modern Europe, who are not obliged to labour for their ſuſtenance, muſt either ſtudy Greek and Latin, or be idle; (for as to cards, and ſome of the late publications of Voltaire, I do not think the ſtudy of either half ſo uſeful or ſo innocent as ſhuttlecock). — I ſhould be apprehenſive, that, if Claſſical Learning were laid aſide, nothing would be ſubſtituted in its place, and that our youth would become altogether diſſipated. In this reſpect, therefore, namely, as the means of improving the faculties of the human mind, I do not

ſee, how the ſtudies of the Grammar-ſchool can be diſpenſed with. Indeed, if we were, like the ſavages, continually employed in ſearching after the neceſſaries of life; or if, like the firſt Romans, our ſituation or temper involved us in perpetual war, I ſhould perhaps allow literary improvement of every kind to be little better than a coſtly ſuperfluity; and if any one were diſpoſed to affirm, that in ſuch a ſtate men may enjoy a greater ſhare of animal pleaſure, than all the ornaments of art and luxury can furniſh, I ſhould not be eager to controvert his opinion. But I take for granted, that man is deſtined for ſomething nobler than mere animal enjoyment; that a ſtate of continual war or unpoliſhed barbariry is unfavourable to our beſt intereſts, as rational, moral, and immortal beings; that competence is preferable to want, leiſure to tumult, and benevolence to fury: and I ſpeak of the arts, not of ſupporting, but of adorning human life; not of rendering men inſenſible to cold and famine; but of enabling them to bear, without being enervated, and enjoy without being corrupted, the bleſſings of a more proſperous condition.

4. Much has been ſaid, by ſome writers, on the impropriety of teaching the ancient languages by book, when the modern tongues are moſt eaſily acquired, without the help of grammars or dictionaries, by ſpeaking only. Hence it has been propoſed, that chil-

dren (to whom the ſtudy of grammar is conceived to be a grievous hardſhip) ſhould learn Latin by being obliged to ſpeak it; for that, however barbarous their ſtyle may be at firſt, it will gradually improve; till at length, though with little knowledge of rules, merely by the force of habit, they attain to ſuch a command of that tongue, as an Engliſhman may of the French, by reſiding a few years at Paris. Upon this principle, ſome projectors have thought of eſtabliſhing a Latin city, whither children ſhould be ſent to learn the language; Montaigne's father made Latin the common dialect of his houſehold *; and many

* Eſſais de Montaigne, liv. 2. chap. 17. — On the ſubject of obliging children to ſpeak Latin before they have acquired a taſte in it, I beg leave to quote the following paſſage from an author, whoſe judgement in theſe matters muſt be allowed to be of the very higheſt authority.

"With this way of good underſtanding the matter, "plain conſtruing, diligent parſing, daily tranſlating, "chearful admoniſhing, and heedful amending of faults, "never leaving behind juſt praiſe for well-doing, I "would have the ſcholar brought up withal, till he had "read and tranſlated over the firſt book of (Cicero's) "Epiſtles choſen out by Sturmius, with a good piece of "a Comedy of Terence alſo. —— All this while, by "mine advice, the child ſhall uſe to ſpeak no Latin. "For, as Cicero ſaith in like matter, with like words, "*Loquendo, male loqui diſcunt*. And that excellent learned man G. Budeus, in his Greek commentaries, ſore "complaineth, that when he began to learn the Latin "tongue, uſe of ſpeaking Latin at the table, and elſe-"where, unadviſedly, did bring him to ſuch an evil "choice of words, to ſuch a crooked framing of ſen-"tences, that no one thing did hurt or hinder him more "all

many philoſophers and teachers have laid it down as a rule, that in the grammar-ſchool nothing but Latin or Greek ſhould ever be ſpoken.

All this, or at leaſt part of it, is very well, if we ſuppoſe the ſole deſign of teaching

" all the days of his life afterward, both for readineſs " in ſpeaking, and alſo good judgement in writing. — " In very deed, if children were brought up in ſuch " a houſe, or ſuch a ſchool, where the Latin tongue " were properly and perfectly ſpoken, as Tiberius and " Caius Gracchii were brought up in their mother Cor- " nelia's houſe; ſurely then the daily uſe of ſpeaking " were the beſt and readieſt way to learn the Latin " tongue. But now, commonly in the beſt ſchools in " England, for words, right choice is ſmally regarded, " true propriety wholly neglected, confuſion is brought " in, barbarouſneſs is bred up ſo in young wits, as after- " wards they be not only marred for ſpeaking, but alſo " corrupted in judgement, as with much ado, or never " at all, they be brought to the right frame again. — " Yet all men covet to have their children ſpeak Latin, " and ſo do I very earneſtly too. We both have one " purpoſe, we agree in deſire, we wiſh one end; but " we differ ſomewhat in order and way that leadeth " rightly to that end. Other would have them ſpeak " at all adventures: and ſo they be ſpeaking, to ſpeak, " the maſter careth not, the ſcholar knoweth not, what. " This is to ſeem, and not to be; except it be, to be " bold without ſhame, raſh without ſkill, full of words " without wit. I wiſh to have them ſpeak ſo, as it may " well appear, that the brain doth govern the tongue, " and that reaſon leadeth forth the talk. — Good under- " ſtanding muſt firſt be bred in the children; which be- " ing nouriſhed with ſkill, and uſe of writing, is the " only way to bring them to judgement and readineſs in " ſpeaking." Aſcham's Scholemaſter, book 1. See alſo Cicero de Orat. lib. 1. § 150. edit. Prouſt.

theſe languages to be, that children may ſpeak and write them as eaſily and incorrectly, as perſons unacquainted with grammar, and with the rules and models of good compoſition, do commonly ſpeak and write their mother-tongue. But ſuch a talent, though on ſome rare occaſions in life it might be uſeful, would not be attended with thoſe certain and more immediate advantages, that one has reaſon to expect from a regular courſe of claſſical ſtudy. — For, firſt, one uſe of claſſic learning is, to fill up the leiſure hours of life with liberal amuſement. Now thoſe readers alone can be adequately charmed with beauty of language, who have attended to the rules of good writing, and even to the niceties of grammar. For the mere knowledge of words gives but little pleaſure; and they who have gone no deeper in language cannot even conceive the delight wherewith a man of learning peruſes an elegant performance. — Secondly, I apprehend, that, in this way of converſation, unleſs you add to it the ſtudy of grammar, and of the beſt authors, the practice of many years will not make you a competent maſter in the language. One muſt always be ſomething of a grammarian to be able thoroughly to underſtand any well-written book; but before one can enter into the delicacies of expreſſion that are to be met with in every page of a good Latin or Greek author, one muſt be an accurate grammarian; the complicated inflexions

inflexions and ſyntax of theſe elegant tongues giving riſe to innumerable ſubtleties of connection, and minute varieties of meaning, whereof the ſuperficial reader, who thinks grammar below his notice, can have no idea. Beſides, the words and phraſes that belong to converſation, are, comparatively ſpeaking, not very numerous: unleſs you read poets, orators, hiſtorians, and philoſophers too, you can never underſtand a language in its full extent. In Engliſh, Latin, Greek, and Italian, and, I believe, in moſt other cultivated tongues, the poetical and rhetorical ſtyles differ greatly from that of common diſcourſe; and one may be a tolerable proficient in the one, who is very ignorant of the other. — But, thirdly, I would obſerve, that the ſtudy of a ſyſtem of grammar, ſo complex and ſo perfect as the Greek or Latin, may, with peculiar propriety, be recommended to children; being ſuited to their underſtanding, and having a tendency to promote the improvement of all their mental faculties. In this ſcience, abſtruſe as it is commonly imagined to be, there are few or no difficulties which a maſter may not render intelligible to any boy of good parts, before he is twelve years old. Words, the matter of this ſcience, are within the reach of every child; and of theſe the human mind, in the beginning of life, is known to be ſuſceptible to an aſtoniſhing degree: and yet in this ſcience there is a ſubtlety, and a variety, ſufficient to call forth

forth all the intellectual powers of the young ſtudent. When one hears a boy analyſe a few ſentences of a Latin author; and ſhow that he not only knows the general meaning, and the import of the particular words, but alſo can inſtantly refer each word to its claſs; enumerate all its terminations, ſpecifying every change of ſenſe, however minute, that may be produced by a change of inflexion or arrangement; explain its ſeveral dependencies; diſtinguiſh the literal meaning from the figurative, one ſpecies of figure from another *, and even the philoſophical uſe of words

* The elements of Rhetoric ſhould always be taught in conjunction with thoſe of Grammar. The former would make the latter more entertaining; and, by ſetting the various parts of language in a new light, would give riſe to new energies in the mind of the ſtudent, and prepare him for reliſhing the beauties and practiſing the rules of good writing; thus heightening the pleaſure of ſtudy, with little or no increaſe of labour. I doubt not but Butler's flippant remark, that "All a Rhetori-"cian's rules Conſiſt in naming of his tools," may have brought the art into ſome diſrepute. But though this were a true account, (and it muſt be a poor ſyſtem of rhetoric of which this is a true account), the art might have its uſe notwithſtanding. Nobody thinks the time loſt to a young ſeaman, which he employs in acquainting himſelf with the names and uſes of the ſeveral parts of a ſhip, and of the other objects that demand the attention of the mariner: nor is the botaniſt idle, while he treaſures up in his memory the various tribes of vegetables; nor the aſtronomer, while he numbers the conſtellations, and learns to call them by their names. In every art there are terms, which muſt be familiar to thoſe who would underſtand it, or ſpeak intelligibly about it; and

words from the idiomatical, and the vulgar from the elegant; recollecting occaſionally other words and phraſes that are ſynonymous, or contrary, or of different though ſimilar ſignification; and accounting for what he ſays, either from the reaſon of the thing, or by quoting a rule of art, or a claſſical authority: — one muſt be ſenſible, that, by ſuch an exerciſe, the memory is likely to be more improved in ſtrength and readineſs, the attention better fixed, the judgement and taſte more ſucceſsfully exerted, and a habit of reflection and ſubtle diſcrimination more eaſily acquired, than it could be by any other employment equally ſuited to the capacity of childhood. A year paſſed in this ſalutary exerciſe will be found to cultivate the human faculties more than ſeven ſpent in prattling that French which is learned by rote: nor would a complete courſe of Voltaire yield half ſo much improvement to a young mind, as a few books of a good Claſſic au-

and few arts are more complex than literary compoſition. Beſides, though ſome of the tropes and figures of ſpeech are eaſily diſtinguiſhed, others require a more difficult ſcrutiny, and ſome knowledge even of the elementary arrangements of philoſophy. And the rules for applying the elegancies of language, being founded in the ſcience of human nature, muſt gradually lead the young rhetorician to attend to what paſſes in his own mind; which of all the ſcenes of human obſervation is the moſt important, and in the early part of life the leaſt attended to.

thor,

thor, of Livy, Cicero, or Virgil, ſtudied in this accurate manner.

I mean not to decry the French tongue, which I know to be uſeful to all, and neceſſary to many. Far leſs would I inſinuate any thing to diſcourage the ſtudy of our own, which I think the fineſt in the world; and which to a member of the Britiſh empire is of greater importance than all other languages. I only inſiſt on the expediency of improving young minds by a grammatical ſtudy of the Claſſic tongues; theſe being at once more *regular* and more *diverſified* than any of the modern, and therefore better adapted to the purpoſe of exerciſing the *judgement* and the *memory* of the ſcholar. And I maintain, that every language, and indeed every thing, that is taught children, ſhould be accurately taught; being of opinion, that the mind is more improved by a little accurate knowledge, than by an extenſive ſmattering; and that it would be better for a young man to be maſter of Euclid or Demoſthenes, than to have a whole dictionary of arts and ſciences by heart. When he has once got a taſte of accuracy, he will know the value and the method of it; and, with a view to the ſame gratification, will habitually purſue the ſame method, both in ſcience, and in the general conduct of his affairs: — whereas a habit of ſuperficial thinking perverts and enervates the powers of the ſoul, leaves many of them to languiſh in to-

tal inactivity; and is too apt to make a man fickle and thoughtleſs, unprincipled and diſſipated for life.

I agree with Roſſeau, that the aim of education ſhould be, to teach us rather *how* to think, than *what* to think; rather to improve our minds ſo as to enable us to think for ourſelves, than to load the memory with the thoughts of other men. Not that I would diſcommend the acquiſition of good principles, and juſt notions, from whatever ſource they are drawn: for indeed the knowledge of the moſt ingenious man upon earth would be very ſcanty, if it were all to be derived from himſelf. Nay, as the parent muſt in many caſes direct the conduct of the child, before the child can diſcern the reaſons of ſuch direction, I am inclined to think, that ſome important principles of religion and morality may with good ſucceſs be imprinted on the memory of children, even before they can perfectly underſtand the arguments by which they may be proved, or the words in which they are expreſſed. — But ſtill it is true, that a mind prepared by proper diſcipline for making diſcoveries of its own, is in a much higher ſtate of cultivation, than that of a mere ſcholar who knows nothing but what he has been taught. The latter reſembles a granary, which may indeed be filled with corn, but can yield no more than it has received; the former may be likened to a fruitful field, which is ever in a condi-

tion to bring riches and plenty, and multiplies an hundred fold every grain that has been committed to it. Now this peculiar advantage ſeems to attend the ſtudy of the Claſſic authors, that it not only ſtores the mind with uſeful learning, but alſo begets a habit of attention, and wonderfully improves both the memory and the judgement.

5. That the grammatical art may be learned as perfectly from an Engliſh or French, as from a Greek or Latin grammar, no perſon will affirm, who attends to the ſubject, and can ſtate the compariſon. Claſſical learning, therefore, is neceſſary to grammatical ſkill. And that the knowledge of grammar tends to purify and preſerve language, might be proved, if a proof were requiſite, from many conſiderations. Every tongue is incorrect, while it is only ſpoken; becauſe men never ſtudy it grammatically, till after they have begun to write it, or compoſe in it. And when brought to its higheſt perfection, by the repeated efforts, and accumulated refinements, of grammarians, lexicographers, philoſophers, etymologiſts, and of authors in general, how incorrectly is it ſpoken and written by the unlearned! How eaſily do ungrammatical phraſes, the effect of ignorance and affectation, inſinuate themſelves into common diſcourſe, and thence into writing! and how difficult is it often found, notwithſtanding all the remonſtrances of learned men, to extirpate thoſe phraſes from the

the language, or prevail with the public to reform them! Where grammar was accurately ſtudied, language has always been elegant and durable: witneſs that of ancient Greece, which, though it underwent conſiderable alterations, as all living languages muſt do, retained its purity for more than a thouſand years. As grammar is neglected, barbariſm muſt prevail. And therefore, the ſtudy of Greek and Latin, being neceſſary to the perfection of the grammatical art, muſt alſo be neceſſary to the permanence and purity even of the modern tongues, and, conſequently, to the preſervation of our hiſtory, poetry, philoſophy, and of every thing valuable in our literature. —— Can thoſe who wiſh well to learning or mankind ever ſeek to depretiate ſo important a ſtudy? Or will it be ſaid, that the knowledge of grammar is unworthy of a gentleman, or man of buſineſs, when it is conſidered, that the moſt profound ſtateſmen, the ableſt orators, the moſt elegant writers, and the greateſt men, that ever appeared on the ſtage of public life, of whom I ſhall only mention Julius Ceſar and Cicero, were not only ſtudious of grammar, but moſt accurate grammarians *?

6. To all this we may add, that the diſcipline generally eſtabliſhed in ſchools of learning inures the youth to obedience and

* Quintil. Orat. Inſt. lib. 1. cap. 4. See alſo *Of the origin and progreſs of language*, vol. 2. p. 494.

ſubordination; of which it is of infinite conſequence to their moral improvement, as well as to the proſperity of their country, that they ſhould early be made ſenſible. —— But is not this diſcipline often too formal, and too rigorous? And if ſo, does it not tend to depreſs the mind, by making it attentive to trifles, and by giving an air of ſervility to the genius, as well as to the outward behaviour? Theſe queſtions need no other anſwer, than the bare recital of a fact, which is obvious to all men; that of all the nations now exiſting, *that* whoſe general character partakes the leaſt of finicalneſs or ſervility, and which has diſplayed an elevation of ſoul, and a ſpirit of freedom, that is without example in the annals of mankind, is the moſt remarkable for ſtrictneſs of diſcipline in its ſchools and univerſities; and ſeems now to be the only nation upon earth that entertains a proper ſenſe of the unſpeakable value of Claſſic erudition. —— A regard to order and lawful authority is as favourable to true greatneſs of mind, as the knowledge of method is to true genius.

7. Some of my readers will pity, and ſome probably laugh at me, for what I am going to ſay in behalf of a practice, which is now in moſt countries both diſuſed and derided; I mean that of obliging the ſtudent to compoſe ſome of his exerciſes in Latin verſe. "What! (it will be ſaid), do you, in oppoſition to the ſentiments of antiquity itſelf,

" ſelf, and of all wiſe men in every age, i-
" magine, that a talent for poetry is to be
" communicated by rule, or acquired by ha-
" bit? Or if it could, would you wiſh to
" ſee us transformed into a nation of ver-
" ſifiers? Poetry may have its uſe; but it
" will neither fill our warehouſes, nor ferti-
" liſe our ſoil, neither rig our fleet, nor re-
" gulate our finances. It has now loſt the
" faculty of building towns, felling timber,
" and curing broken bones; and I think it
" was never famous for repleniſhing either
" the pocket, or the belly. No, no, Sir; a
" garret in Grubſtreet, however honourable
" in your eyes, is not the ſtation to which I
" intend to breed my ſon."

Permit me to aſk in my turn, Whether it is in order to make them authors by trade, or for what other purpoſe it is, that boys have the taſk enjoined them, of compoſing themes and tranſlations, and performing thoſe other exerciſes, to which writing is neceſſary. I believe it will be allowed, that habits of accurate thinking, and of ſpeaking correctly and elegantly, are uſeful and ornamental in every ſtation of life. Now Cicero and Quintilian, and many other authors, affirm, that theſe habits are moſt effectually acquired by the frequent uſe of the pen*;

* Cicero de Orat. lib. 1. § 150. Edit. Prouſt. Quintil. Inſt. Or. lib. 10. cap. 3.

not

not in extracting common places from books *, but in giving permanence and regularity to our own thoughts expreſſed in our own words. The themes and tranſlations performed by boys in a grammar-ſchool are the beginnings of this ſalutary practice; and are known to have a happy effect in forming the judgement, improving the memory, and quickening the invention, of the young ſtudent, in giving him a command of words, a correct phraſeology, and a habit of thinking with accuracy and method.

Now,

* To enable us to remember what we read, ſome authors recommend a book of common-places, wherein we are deſired to write down, according to a certain artificial order, all thoſe paſſages that we wiſh to add to our ſtock of learning. But other authors, of equal judgement in theſe matters, have blamed this practice of writing out quotations. It is certain, that when we read with a view to fill up common-places, we are apt to attend rather to particular paſſages, than to the ſcope and ſpirit of the whole; and that, having tranſcribed the favourite paragraph, we are not ſolicitous to remember it, as knowing that we may at any time find it in our common-place book. Beſides, life is ſhort, and health precious; and if we do not think more than we either write or read, our ſtudies will avail us little. But this practice of continual tranſcription conſumes time, and impairs health, and yet conveys no improvement to the mind, becauſe it requires no thought, and exerciſes no faculty. Moreover, it inclines us to form ourſelves entirely upon the ſentiments of other men; and as different authors think differently on many points, it may make us change our opinions ſo often, that at laſt we ſhall come to have no fixed principle at all. —— And yet, on the other hand, it muſt be allowed, that many things occur, both

Now, as the design of these exercises is not to make men professed prose-authors, so neither is the practice of versifying intended to make them poets. I do not wish the numbers of versifiers to multiply; I shall, if you please, admit the old maxim, "Poeta nascitur, non fit;" and that it would be as easy to soften marble into pincushions as to communicate the art of poetry to one who wants the genius:

—— Ego nec studium sine divite vena,
Nec rude quid possit video ingenium. ——

The practice in question may, however, in my judgement, be attended with some good effects. —— First, though we have for ever

both in reading and in experience, which ought not to be forgotten, and yet cannot be preserved, unless committed to writing. Perhaps, then, it is best to follow a middle course; and, when we register facts or sentiments that occur in reading, to throw aside the author from whom we take them, and do it in our own words. In this way writing is profitable, because it is attended with thought and recollection, as well as practice in composition. And when we are so much masters of the sentiments of another man as to be able to express them with accuracy in our own words, then we may be said to have digested them, and made them our own; and then it is, and not before, that our understanding is really improved by them. If we chuse to preserve a specimen of an author's style, or to transcribe any of his thoughts in his own words on account of something that pleases in the expression, there can be no harm in this, provided we do not employ too much time in it.

lost

loſt the true pronunciation of Latin and Greek, yet the leſs falſe our pronunciation is, the more agreeable and intelligible it will probably be. Verſification, therefore, conſidered as an exerciſe for exemplifying and fixing in the mind the rules of proſody, may be allowed to have its uſe in correcting the pronunciation. —— But, ſecondly, it has a further uſe, in heightening the charms of poetical compoſition, by improving our ſenſe of poetical harmony. I have already mentioned amuſement as one of the advantages of claſſic learning. Now good poetry is doubly amuſing to a reader who has ſtudied and practiſed verſification; as the ſhapes and colours of animal and vegetable nature ſeem doubly beautiful to the eye of a painter. "I "begin," ſays Pope, ſpeaking of his proficiency in drawing, "to diſcover beauties "that were till now imperceptible to me. "Every corner of an eye, or turn of a noſe "or ear, the ſmalleſt degree of light or ſhade "on a cheek or in a dimple, have charms "to diſtract me *." For the ſame reaſon, therefore, that I would recommend drawing to him who wiſhes to acquire a true taſte for the beauties of nature, I ſhould recommend a little practice in verſifying to thoſe who would be thoroughly ſenſible to the charm of poetic numbers.— Thirdly, this practice is ſtill more important, as it gradually ſup-

* Pope's Letters to Gay.

plies the ſtudent with a ſtore of words; thereby facilitating the acquiſition of the language: and as it accuſtoms him to exert his judgement and taſte, as well as memory, in the choice of harmonious and elegant expreſſions. By compoſing in proſe, he learns to think and ſpeak methodically; and his poetical exerciſes under a proper direction, will make the ornaments of language familiar to him, and give preciſion to his thoughts, and a vigorous brevity to his ſtyle. Theſe advantages may, I preſume, be in ſome degree attained, though his verſes, unaided by genius, ſhould never riſe above mediocrity: if the muſes are propitious, his improvement will be proportionably greater.

But is not this exerciſe too difficult? — and does it not take up too much time? —— Too much time it ought not to take up; nor ſhould it be impoſed on thoſe who find it too difficult. But if we conſult experience, we ſhall find, that boys of ordinary talents are capable of it, and that it never has on any occaſion proved detrimental to literature. I know ſeveral learned men who were inured to it in their youth; but I never heard them complain of its unprofitableneſs or difficulty: and I cannot think, that Grotius or Buchanan, Milton or Addiſon, Browne or Gray *, had ever any reaſon to lament, as

* [*See next page.*]

loſt, the hours they employed in this exerciſe. It is generally true, that genius diſplays itſelf to the beſt advantage in its native tongue. Yet is it to be wiſhed, that the talent of writing Latin verſe were a little more cultivated among us; for it has often proved the means of extending the reputation of our authors, and conſequently of adding ſomething to the literary glories of Great Britain. Boileau is ſaid not to have known that there were any good poets in England, till Addiſon made him a preſent of the *Muſæ Anglicanæ*. Many of the fineſt performances of Pope, Dryden, and Milton, have appeared not ungracefully in a Roman dreſs. And thoſe foreigners muſt entertain a high opinion of our Paſtoral poetry, who have ſeen the Latin tranſlations of Vincent Bourne, particularly thoſe of the ballads of *Tweedſide*, *William and Margaret*, and Rowe's *Deſpairing beſide a clear ſtream;* of which it is no compliment to ſay, that in ſweetneſs of numbers,

[*See the reference-mark in the preceding page.*]

* Iſaac Hawkins Browne, Eſq; author of ſeveral excellent poems, particularly one in Latin, on the Immortality of the ſoul; of which Mrs Carter juſtly ſays, that it does honour to our country. —— Mr Gray of Cambridge, the author of the fineſt odes, and of the fineſt moral elegy in the world, wrote many elegant Latin poems in his youth, with ſome of which Mr Maſon has lately obliged the public. The Latin poems of Grotius and Buchanan, Milton and Addiſon, have long been univerſally known and admired.

and

and elegant expreſſion, they are at leaſt equal to the originals, and ſcarce inferior to any thing in Ovid or Tibullus.

Enough, I hope, has been ſaid to evince the utility of that mode of diſcipline which for the moſt part is, and always, in my opinion, ought to be, eſtabliſhed in grammar-ſchools. If the reader admit the truth of theſe remarks, he will be ſatisfied, that "the "ſtudy of the claſſic authors does not ne-"ceſſarily oblige the ſtudent to employ too "much time in the acquiſition of words:" for that by means of thoſe words the mind may be ſtored with valuable knowledge; and that the acquiſition of them, prudently conducted, becomes to young perſons one of the beſt inſtruments of intellectual proficiency, which in the preſent ſtate of human ſociety it is poſſible to imagine.

II. I need not ſpend much time in refuting the ſecond objection, "That theſe lan-"guages, when acquired, are not worth the "labour." There never was a man of learning and taſte, who would not deny the fact. Thoſe perſons are moſt delighted with the ancient writers, who underſtand them beſt; and none affect to deſpiſe them, but they who are ignorant of their value. ——Whether the pleaſure and profit ariſing from the knowledge of the Claſſic tongues is ſufficient to repay the toil of acquiring them, is a point which thoſe only who have made the acquiſition are entitled to determine. And they,

we are sure, will determine in the affirmative. The admirer of Homer and Demosthenes, Virgil and Cicero, Xenophon and Cesar, Herodotus and Livy, will tell us, that he would not for any consideration give up his skill in the language of those authors. Every man of learning wishes, that his son may be learned; and that not so much from a view to pecuniary advantage, as from a desire to have him supplied with the means of useful instruction and liberal amusement. It is true, that habit will make us fond of trifling pursuits, and mistake imaginary for real excellence. The being accustomed to that kind of study, and perhaps also the pride, or the vanity, or simply the consciousness, of being learned, may account for part of the pleasure that attends the perusal of the Greek and Roman writings. But sure it is but a small part which may be thus accounted for. The Greeks were more passionate admirers of Homer and Demosthenes, and the Romans of Virgil and Cicero, than we; and yet were not under the necessity of employing so much time in the study of these authors, nor, consequently, so liable to contract a liking from long acquaintance, or to be proud of an accomplishment which was common to them with all their countrymen.

The knowledge of the classics is the best foundation to the study of Law, Physic, Theology, Rhetoric, Agriculture, and other honourable arts and sciences. In polite nations,

tions, and in companies where the rational character is held in any eſteem, it has generally been regarded as a recommendatory talent. As a ſource of recreation, for filling up the intervals of leiſure, its importance has been acknowledged by many names of the higheſt authority. And ſurely the Muſes are more elegant, more inſtructive, and more pleaſing companions, than dogs, horſes, gamblers, or ſots: and in attending to the wiſdom of former ages, we may reaſonably be thought to paſs our time to better purpoſe, than in hearing or helping about the cenſures, calumnies, and other follies, of the preſent.

III. It has been ſaid, that "ſchool-learning has a tendency to encumber the genius, and, conſequently, to weaken rather than improve the mind." Here opens another field for declamation. Who has not heard the learned formality of Ben Johnſon oppoſed to Shakeſpeare's "native wood-notes wild;" and inferences made from the compariſon, very much to the diſcredit, not of the learned poet only, but of learning itſelf? Milton, too, is thought by ſome to have poſſeſſed a ſuperfluity of erudition, as well as to have been too oſtentatious in diſplaying it. And the ancients are ſuppoſed to have derived great benefit from their not being obliged, as we are, to ſtudy a number of languages.

It is true, a man may be ſo intemperate in reading,

reading, as to hurt both his body and his mind. They who always read, and never think, become pedants and changelings. And thoſe who employ the beſt part of their time in learning languages, are rarely found to make proficiency in art or ſcience. To gain a perfect knowledge even of one tongue, is a work of much labour; though ſome men have ſuch a talent this way as to acquire, with moderate application, a competent ſkill in ſeveral. Milton, before he was twenty years old, had compoſed verſes in Latin, Italian, and Greek, as well as in Engliſh. But the generality of minds are not equal to this; nor is it neceſſary they ſhould. One may be very ſenſible of the beauties of a foreign tongue, and may read it with eaſe and pleaſure, who can neither ſpeak it, nor compoſe in it. And, except where the genius has a facility in acquiring them, and a ſtrong bias to that ſort of ſtudy, I would not recommend it to a young man to make himſelf maſter of many languages. For, ſurely, to be able to expreſs the ſame thought in the dialogues of ten different nations, is not the end for which man was ſent into the world.

The preſent objection, as well as the former, is founded on what every man of letters would call a miſtake of fact. No perſon who underſtands Greek and Latin will ever admit, that theſe languages can be an incumbrance to the mind. And perhaps it would be difficult to prove, even by a ſingle inſtance,

inſtance, that genius was ever hurt by learning. Ben Johnſon's misfortune was, not that he knew too much, but that he could not make a proper uſe of his knowledge; a misfortune, which aroſe rather from a defect of genius or taſte, than from a ſuperabundance of erudition. With the ſame genius, and leſs learning, he would probably have made a worſe figure.——His play of Catiline is an ill-digeſted collection of facts and paſſages from Salluſt. Was it his knowledge of Greek and Latin that prevented his making a better choice? To comprehend every thing the hiſtorian has recorded of that incendiary, it is not requiſite that one ſhould be a great ſcholar. By looking into Roſe's tranſlation, any man who underſtands Engliſh may make himſelf maſter of the whole narrative in half a day. It was Johnſon's want of taſte, that made him transfer from the hiſtory to the play ſome paſſages and facts that ſuit not the genius of dramatic writing: it was want of taſte, that made him diſpoſe his materials according to the hiſtorical arrangement; which, however favourable to calm information, is not calculated for working thoſe effects on the paſſions and fancy, which it is the aim of tragedy to produce. It was the ſame want of taſte, that made him, out of a rigid attachment to hiſtorical truth, lengthen his piece with ſupernumerary events inconſiſtent with the unity of deſign, and not ſubſervient to the cataſtrophe;

ſtrophe; and it was doubtleſs owing to want of invention, that he confined himſelf ſo ſtrictly to the letter of the ſtory. Had he recollected the advice of Horace, (of which he could not be ignorant, as he tranſlated the whole poem into Engliſh verſe), he muſt have avoided ſome of theſe faults:

Publica materies privati juris erit, ſi
Non circa vilem patulumque moraberis orbem,
Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere, fidus
Interpres; nec deſilies imitator in arctum,
Unde pedem proferre pudor vetat, aut operis
lex *.

A little more learning, therefore, or rather a more ſeaſonable application of what he had, would have been of great uſe to the author on this occaſion. —— Shakeſpeare's play of Julius Ceſar is founded on Plutarch's life of Brutus. The poet has adopted many of the incidents and ſpeeches recorded by the hiſtorian, whom he had read in Sir Thomas North's tranſlation. But great judgement appears in the choice of paſſages. Thoſe events and ſentiments that either are affecting in themſelves, or contribute to the diſplay of human characters and paſſions, he has adopted; what ſeemed unſuitable to the drama is omitted. By reading Plutarch and Sophocles in the original, together with the

* Ar. Poet. verſ. 135. See Dr Hurd's elegant commentary and notes.

Poetics of Ariſtotle and Horace's epiſtle to the Piſoes, Shakeſpeare might have made this tragedy better; but I cannot conceive how ſuch a preparation, had the poet been capable of it, could have been the cauſe of his making it worſe. It is very probable, that the inſtance of Shakeſpeare may have induced ſome perſons to think unfavourably of the influence of learning upon genius; but a concluſion ſo important ſhould never be inferred from one inſtance, eſpecially when that is allowed to be extraordinary, and almoſt ſupernatural. From the phenomena of ſo tranſcendent a genius, we muſt not judge of human nature in general; no more than we are to take the rules of Britiſh agriculture from what is practiſed in the Summer Iſlands. — Nor let it be any objection to the utility of claſſic learning, that we often meet with men of excellent parts, whoſe faculties were never improved, either by the doctrine or by the diſcipline of the ſchools. A practice which is not indiſpenſably neceſſary, may yet be highly uſeful. We have heard of merchants, who could hardly write or read, ſuperintending an extenſive commerce, and acquiring great wealth and eſteem by the moſt honourable means: yet who will ſay, that Writing and Reading are not uſeful to the merchant? There have been men eminent both for genius and for virtue, who in the beginning of life were almoſt totally neglected: yet who will ſay, that the care of parents,

and early habits of virtue and reflection, are not of infinite importance to the human mind?

Milton was one of the moſt learned men this nation ever produced. But his great learning neither impaired his judgement, nor checked his imagination. A richer vein of invention, as well as a more correct taſte, appears in the Paradiſe Loſt, written when he was near ſixty years of age, than in any of his earlier performances. Paradiſe Regained, and Samſon Agoniſtes, which were his laſt works, are not ſo full of imagery, nor admit ſo much fancy, as many of his other pieces; but they diſcover a conſummate judgement; and little is wanting to make each of them perfect in its kind. —— I am not offended at that profuſion of learning which here and there appears in the Paradiſe Loſt. It gives a claſſical air to the poem: it refreſhes the mind with new ideas; and there is ſomething, in the very ſound of the names of places and perſons whom he celebrates, that is wonderfully pleaſing to the ear. Admit all this to be no better than pedantic ſuperfluity; yet will it not follow, that Milton's learning did him any harm upon the whole, provided it appear to have improved him in matters of higher importance. And that it did ſo, is undeniable. This poet is not more eminent for ſtrength and ſublimity of genius, than for the art of his compoſition; which he owed partly to a fine taſte

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in harmony, and partly to his accurate knowledge of the ancients. The ſtyle of his numbers has not often been imitated with ſucceſs. It is not merely the want of rhyme, nor the diverſified poſition of pauſes, nor the drawing out of the ſenſe from one line to another; far leſs is it the mixture of antiquated words and ſtrange idioms, that conſtitutes the charm of Milton's verſification; though many of his imitators, when they copy him in theſe or in ſome of theſe reſpects, think they have acquitted themſelves very well. But one muſt ſtudy the beſt Claſſic authors with as much critical ſkill as Milton did, before one can pretend to rival him in the art of harmonious writing. For, after all the rules that can be given, there is ſomething in this art, which cannot be acquired but by a careful ſtudy of the ancient maſters, particularly Homer, Demoſthenes, Plato, Cicero, and Virgil; every one of whom, or at leaſt the two firſt and the laſt, it would be eaſy to prove, that Milton has imitated, in the conſtruction of his numbers. —— In a word, we have good reaſon to conclude, that Milton's genius, inſtead of being overloaded or encumbered, was greatly improved, enriched, and refined, by his learning. At leaſt we are ſure this was his own opinion. Never was there a more indefatigable ſtudent. And from the ſuperabundance of Claſſic alluſions to be met with in every page of his poetry, we may gueſs how highly he

valued the literature of Greece and Rome, and how frequently he meditated upon it.

Spenſer was learned in Latin and Greek, as well as in Italian. But either the faſhion of the times, or ſome deficiency in his own taſte, inclined him to prefer the modern to the ancient models. His genius was comprehenſive and ſublime, his ſtyle copious, his ſenſe of harmony delicate: and nothing ſeems to have been wanting to make him a poet of the higheſt rank, but a more intimate acquaintance with the claſſic authors. We may at leaſt venture to ſay, that if he had been a little more converſant in theſe, he would not, in his Shepherd's Calendar, have debaſed the tenderneſs of paſtoral with the impure mixture of theological diſputation; nor would he have been ſo intoxicated with the ſplendid faults of the Orlando Furioſo, as to conſtruct his Fairy Queen on that Gothic model, rather than according to the plan which Homer invented, and which Virgil and Taſſo (who were alſo favourites with our author) had ſo happily imitated. It is ſaid to be on account of the purity of his ſtyle, and the variety of his invention, and not for any thing admirable in his plan, that the Italians in general prefer Arioſto to Taſſo *: — and indeed we can hardly conceive, how

* The Academicians *della Cruſca* publiſhed criticiſms on Taſſo's *Gieruſalemme Liberata*; but thoſe related chiefly to the language, and were founded in too rigorous a partiality

how a tale ſo complex and ſo abſurd, ſo heterogeneous in its parts, and ſo extravagant as a whole, ſhould be more eſteemed than a ſimple, probable, perſpicuous, and intereſting fable. Yet Spenſer gave the preference to the former; a fact ſo extraordinary, conſidering his abilities in other reſpects, that we cannot account for it, without ſuppoſing it to have been partly the effect of a bias contracted by long acquaintance. And if ſo, have we not reaſon to think, that if he had been but equally converſant with better patterns, his taſte would have acquired a different and better direction?

Dryden's knowledge of foreign and ancient languages did not prevent his being a perfect maſter of his own. No author ever had a more exquiſite ſenſe of the energy and beauty of Engliſh words; though it cannot be denied, that his averſion to words of foreign original, and his deſire on all occaſions to do honour to his mother-tongue, betrays him frequently into mean phraſes and vulgar idioms. His unhappy circumſtances, or rather perhaps the faſhion of his age, alike un-

tiality for the Florentine dialect. But "the magnificence of Taſſo's numbers and diction, together with "his great conformity to Epic rules, will for ever over-"balance Arioſto's ſuperior gracefulneſs and rapidity "of expreſſion, and greater fertility of invention. The "*Jeruſalem* will always be the more ſtriking, and the *Or-*"*lando* the more pleaſing of the two poems."

Baretti on Italy, vol. 1. *p.* 252.

friendly

friendly to good morals and good writing, did not permit him to avail himself of his great learning so much as might have been expected. The author of Polymetis has proved him guilty of many mistakes in regard to the ancient mythology: and I believe it will be allowed, by all his impartial readers, that a little more learning, or something of a more classical taste, would have been of great use to him, as it was to his illustrious imitator.

I know not whether any nation ever produced a more singular genius than Cowley. He abounds in tender thoughts, beautiful lines, and emphatical expressions. His wit is inexhaustible, and his learning extensive; but his taste is generally barbarous, and seems to have been formed upon such models as Donne, Martial, and the worst parts of Ovid: nor is it possible to read his longer poems with pleasure, while we retain any relish for the simplicity of ancient composition. If this author's ideas had been fewer, his conceits would have been less frequent; so that in one respect learning may be said to have hurt his genius. Yet it does not appear, that his Greek and Latin did him any harm; for his imitations of Anacreon are almost the only parts of him that are now remembered or read. His Davideis, and his translations of Pindar, are destitute of harmony, simplicity, and every other Classical grace. Had his inclinations led him to a frequent perusal

of

of the moſt elegant authors of antiquity, his poems would certainly have been the better for it.

It was never ſaid, nor thought, that Swift, Pope, or Addiſon *, impaired their genius by too cloſe an application to Latin and Greek. On the contrary, we have reaſon to aſcribe to their knowledge of theſe tongues, that claſſical purity of ſtyle by which their writings are diſtinguiſhed. All our moſt eminent philoſophers and divines, Bacon, Newton, Cud-

* "Mr Addiſon employed his firſt years in the ſtudy "of the old Greek and Roman writers; whoſe language "and manner he caught at that time of life, as ſtrongly "as other young people gain a French accent, or a gen- "teel air. An early acquaintance with the Claſſics is "what may be called the good-breeding of poetry, as "it gives a certain gracefulneſs which never forſakes a "mind that contracted it in youth, but is ſeldom or ne- "ver hit by thoſe who would learn it too late. He firſt "diſtinguiſhed himſelf by his Latin compoſitions, pu- "bliſhed in the *Muſæ Anglicanæ*; and was admired as "one of the beſt authors ſince the Auguſtan age, in the "two Univerſities, and the greateſt part of Europe, be- "fore he was talked of as a poet in town. There is not "perhaps any harder taſk than to tame the natural wild- "neſs of wit, and to civilize the fancy. The generality "of our old Engliſh poets abound in forced conceits and "affected phraſes; and even thoſe who are ſaid to come "the neareſt to exactneſs are but too often fond of un- "natural beauties, and aim at ſomething better than per- "fection. If Mr Addiſon's example and precepts be the "occaſion, that there now begins to be a great demand "for correctneſs, we may juſtly attribute it to his be- "ing firſt faſhioned by the ancient models, and familia- "rized to propriety of thought, and chaſtity of ſtyle."

Tickel's Account of the life and writings of Addiſon.

worth,

worth, Hooker, Taylor, Atterbury, Stillingfleet, were profoundly ſkilled in ancient literature. And every rational admirer of Mr Locke will acknowledge, that if his learning had been equal to his good ſenſe and manly ſpirit, his works would have been ſtill more creditable to himſelf, and more uſeful to mankind.

In writings of wit and humour, one would be apt to think, that there is no great occaſion for the knowledge of antiquity; it being the author's chief aim and buſineſs, to accommodate himſelf to the manners of the preſent time. And if ſtudy be detrimental to any faculty of the mind, we might ſuſpect, that a playful imagination, the parent of wit and humour, would be moſt likely to ſuffer by it. Yet the hiſtory of our firſt-rate geniuſes in this way (Shakeſpeare always excepted) is a proof of the contrary. There is more learning, as well as more wit, in Hudibras, than in any book of the ſame ſize now extant. In the Tale of a Tub, the Tatler, and the Spectator, the Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, and in many parts of Fielding, we diſcover at once a brilliant wit and copious erudition.

I have confined theſe brief remarks to Engliſh writers. But the ſame thing might be proved by examples from every literary nation of modern, and even of ancient Europe. For we muſt not ſuppoſe, that the Greek and Latin authors, becauſe they did not ſtudy

many languages, were illiterate men. Homer and Virgil were ſkilled in all the learning of their time. The men of letters in thoſe days were capable of more intenſe application, and had a greater thirſt of knowledge, than the generality of the moderns; and would often, in defiance of poverty, fatigue, and danger, travel into diſtant lands, and viſit famous places and perſons, to qualify themſelves for inſtructing mankind. And, however learned we may be in modern writings, our curioſity can hardly fail to be raiſed in regard to the ancient, when we conſider, that the greater part of theſe were the work, and contain the thoughts of men, who had themſelves been engaged in the moſt eventful ſcenes of active life; while moſt modern books contain only the notions of ſpeculative writers, who know but the theory of buſineſs, and that but imperfectly, and whoſe determinations upon the principles of great affairs, and the feelings and ſentiments peculiar to active life, are little better than conjecture. At any rate, may we not affirm, that "without the aid of ancient "learning, genius cannot hope to riſe to "thoſe honours to which it is entitled, nor "to reach that perfection to which it naturally aſpires?" The exceptions are ſo few, and ſo ſingular, that it is unneceſſary to inſiſt upon them.

Were we to conſider this matter abſtractly, we ſhould be led to the ſame concluſion.

For what is the effect of learning upon a ſound mind? Is it not to enlarge our ſtock of ideas; to aſcertain and correct our experimental knowledge; to give us habits of attention, recollection, and obſervation; and help us to methodiſe our thoughts, whether acquired or natural, as well as to expreſs them with perſpicuity and elegance? This may give a direction to our inventive powers, but ſurely cannot weaken them. The very worſt effect that Claſſical learning can produce on the intelligent mind, is, that it may ſometimes transform an original genius into an imitator. Yet this happens not often; and when it does happen, we ought not perhaps to complain. Ingenious imitations may be as delightful, and as uſeful, as original compoſitions. One would not exchange Virgil's Georgic for twenty ſuch poems as Heſiod's *Works and Days*, nor Pope's Eloiſa for all the Epiſtles of Ovid. The ſixth book of the Eneid, though an imitation of the eleventh of the Odyſſey, is incomparably more ſublime; and the night-adventure of Diomede and Ulyſſes, excellent as it is, muſt be allowed to be inferior to the epiſode of Niſus and Euryalus. Several cantos might be mentioned of the *Fairy Queen*, the preſervation of which would not compenſate the loſs of *The Caſtle of Indolence:* and notwithſtanding the merit of Cervantes, I believe there are few Critics in Great Britain, who do not think in their hearts, that Fielding has outdone his maſter.

While

While the literary world can boaſt of ſuch imitators as Virgil and Taſſo, Boileau and Pope, it has no great reaſon to lament the ſcarcity of original writers.

IV. The fourth and laſt objection to the ſtudy of Latin and Greek, "That the Claſſic "authors contain deſcriptions and doc- "trines, that tend to ſeduce the underſtand- "ing, and corrupt the heart," — is unhap- pily founded in truth. And indeed, in moſt languages there are too many books liable to this cenſure. And, though a melancholy truth, it is however true, that a young man, in his cloſet, and at a diſtance from bad ex- ample, if he has the misfortune to fall into a certain track of ſtudy which at preſent is not unfaſhionable, may debaſe his underſtand- ing, corrupt his heart, and learn the rudi- ments of almoſt every depravation incident to human nature. But to effect this, the knowledge of modern tongues is alone ſuffi- cient. Immoral and impious writing is one of thoſe arts in which the moderns are con- feſſedly ſuperior to the Greeks and Romans.

It does not appear, from what remains of their works, that any of the old philoſophers ever went ſo far as ſome of the modern, in recommending irreligion and immorality. The Pagan theology is too abſurd to leſſen our reverence for the Goſpel; but ſome of our philoſophers, as we are pleaſed to call them, have been labouring hard, and I fear not without ſucceſs, to make mankind re-

nounce all regard for religious truth, both natural and revealed. Jupiter and his kindred gods may paſs for machines in an ancient Epic poem; but in a modern one they would be ridiculous, even in that capacity: a proof, that in ſpite of the enchanting ſtrains wherein their atchievements are celebrated, they have loſt all credit and conſideration in the world, and that the idolatrous fables of claſſical poetry can never more do any harm. From the ſcepticiſm of Pyrrho, and the Atheiſm of Epicurus, what danger is now to be apprehended! The language of Empiricus, and the poetry of Lucretius, may claim attention; but the reaſonings of both the one and the other are too childiſh to ſubvert any ſound principle, or corrupt any good heart; and would probably have been forgotten or deſpiſed long ago, if ſome worthy authors of theſe latter times had not taken pains to revive and recommend them. The parts of ancient ſcience that are, and always have been, ſtudied moſt, are the Peripatetic and Stoical ſyſtems; and theſe may undoubtedly be read, not only without danger, but even with great benefit both to the heart and to the underſtanding.

The fineſt treatiſes of Pagan morality are indeed imperfect; but their authors are entitled to honour, for a good intention, and for having done their beſt. Error in that ſcience, as well as in theology, though in us the effect of prejudice and pride, was gene-

rally

rally in them the effect of ignorance: and those of them, whose names are most renowned, and whose doctrines are best understood, as Socrates, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, and Antoninus, have probably done, and still may do, service to mankind, by the importance of their precepts, by their amiable pictures of particular virtues, and by the pathetic admonitions and appositе examples and reasonings wherewith their morality is enforced. Love to their country; the parental, filial, and conjugal charities; resignation to the Divine will; superiority to the evils of life, and to the gifts of fortune; the laws of justice, the rights of human nature; the dignity of temperance, the baseness of sensuality, the proper direction of fortitude, and a generous, candid, and friendly behaviour, are enjoined in their writings with a warmth of expression, and force of argument, which a Christian moralist might be proud to imitate. — In a word, I think it may be affirmed with confidence, that the knowledge of ancient philosophy and history must contribute to the improvement of the human mind, but cannot now corrupt the heart or understanding of any person who is a friend to truth and virtue.

But what have you to say in vindication of the indecency of the ancient poets, of Aristophanes, Catullus, Ovid, Martial, Petronius, and even of Persius, Juvenal, and Horace?

race? Truly, not a word. I abandon every thing of that ſort, whether modern or ancient, to the utmoſt vengeance of Satire and Criticiſm; and ſhould rejoice to hear, that from the monuments of human wit all indecency were expunged for ever. Nor is there any circumſtance that could attend ſuch a purification, that would make me regret it. The immoral paſſages in moſt of the authors now mentioned are but few, and have neither elegance nor harmony to recommend them to any but profligates: — ſo ſtrict is the connection between virtue and good taſte; and ſo true it is, that want of decency will always in one degree or other betray want of ſenſe. Horace, Perſius, Martial, Catullus, and Ovid himſelf, might give up all their immoralities, without loſing any of their wit: — and as to Ariſtophanes and Petronius, I have never been able to diſcover any thing in either, that might not be conſigned to eternal oblivion, without the leaſt detriment to literature. The latter, notwithſtanding the name which he has, I know not how, acquired, is in every reſpect (with the reſerve of a few tolerable verſes ſcattered through his book) a vile writer; his ſtyle harſh and affected; and his argument ſuch as can excite no emotion, in any mind not utterly depraved, but contempt and abhorrence. The wit and humour of the Athenian poet are now become almoſt inviſible, and ſeem never to have been very conſpicuous.

The

The reception he met with in his own time was probably owing to the licentiouſneſs of his manners, and the virulence of his defamation, (qualities which have given a temporary name to more bad poets than one); and for his reputation in latter times, as a claſſic author, he muſt have been indebted, not to the poignancy of his wit, or the delicacy of his humour, nor to his powers of invention and arrangement, nor to any natural diſplay of human manners to be found in him, (for of all this merit he ſeems to be deſtitute), but ſolely to the antiquity of his language. In proof of one part of this remark, it may be obſerved, that Plato in his *Sympoſium* deſcribes him as a glutton, drunkard, and profligate: and to evince the probability of another part of it, I need only mention the exceſſive labour and zeal wherewith commentators have illuſtrated certain Greek and Latin performances, which if they had been written in our days would never have been read, and which cannot boaſt of any excellence, either in the ſentiment or compoſition.

But do you really think, that ſuch mutilations of the old poets, as you ſeem to propoſe, can ever take place? Do you think, that the united authority of all the potentates on earth could annihilate, or conſign to oblivion, thoſe exceptionable paſſages? — I do not: but I think that thoſe paſſages ſhould never be explained, nor put in the hands of children.

children. And ſure, it is not neceſſary that they ſhould. In ſome late editions of Horace, the impurities are omitted, and not ſo much left as a line of aſteriſks, to raiſe a boy's curioſity. By the attention of parents and teachers, might not all the poets uſually read in ſchools be printed in the ſame manner? Might not children be informed, that, in order to become learned, it is neceſſary to read, not every Greek and Latin book, but thoſe books only that may mend the heart, improve the taſte, and enlarge the underſtanding? Might they not be made ſenſible of the importance of Bacon's aphoriſm, "That ſome books are to be taſted, others "to be ſwallowed, and ſome few to be "chewed and digeſted?" — that is, as the Noble author explains it, "That ſome are to "be read only in parts; others to be read, "but not curiouſly; and ſome few to be "read wholly with diligence and attention?" — a rule, which, if duly attended to, would greatly promote the advancement of true learning, and the pleaſure and profit of the ſtudent. Might not a young man be taught to ſet a proper value on good compoſitions, and to entertain ſuch contempt for the bad, as would ſecure him againſt their influence? All this I cannot but think practicable, if thoſe who ſuperintend education would ſtudy to advance the moral as well as intellectual improvement of the ſcholar; and if teachers, tranſlators, and commentators, would

conſider, that to explain dulneſs is fooliſh, and to illuſtrate obſcenity criminal. And if all this were practiſed, we ſhould have no reaſon to complain, of claſſical erudition, that it has any tendency to ſeduce the underſtanding, or inflame the paſſions. In fact, its inflammatory and ſeductive qualities would never have been alarming, if commentators had thought more, and written leſs. But they were unhappily too wiſe to value any thing beyond the knowledge of old words. To have told them, that it is eſſential to all good writing to improve as well as inform, and to regulate the affections as well as amuſe the fancy and enrich the memory; that wicked books can pleaſe none but worthleſs men, who have no right to be pleaſed, and that their authors inſtead of praiſe deſerve puniſhment; — would have been to addreſs them in a ſtyle, which with all their knowledge of the grammar and dictionary they could not have underſtood *.

Still

* It muſt move the indignation of every perſon who is not an arrant bookworm, or abandoned debauchee, to obſerve how induſtriouſly Johannes Douſa, and others of that phlegmatic brotherhood, have expounded the indecencies of Greece and Rome, and dragged into light thoſe abominations that ought to have remained in utter darkneſs for ever. — Monſ. Nodot, a critic of the laſt century, on occaſion of having recovered, as he pretends, a part of an ancient manuſcript, writes to Monſ. Charpentier, Directeur de l'academie Françoiſe, in the following terms. " J'ai fait, Monſieur, une decouverte

Still I ſhall be told, that this ſcheme, tho' practicable, is too difficult to permit the hope of its being ever put in execution. Perhaps it may be ſo. And what then? Becauſe paſſages that convey improper ideas may be found in ſome ancient writings, ſhall we deprive young people of all the inſtruction and pleaſure that attends a regular courſe of claſſical ſtudy? Becauſe Horace wrote ſome paultry lines, and Ovid ſome worthleſs poems, muſt Virgil, and Livy, and Cicero, and Plutarch, and Homer, be conſigned to oblivion? I do not here ſpeak of the beauties of the Greek and Latin authors, nor of the vaſt diſproportion there is between what is good in them, and what is bad. In every thing human there is a mixture of evil: but are we

tres-avantageuſe a l'empire des lettres: et pour ne pas tenir votre eſprit en ſuſpens, plein de la joye que je reſſens moi-meme, je vous dirai avec precipitation, que j'ai entre mes mains ce qui manquoit de —— ——. Vous pouvez croire, Monſieur, ſi aimant cet auteur au point que je fais —— &c. Vous appercevrez, Monſieur, dans cet ouvrage des beautès qui vous charmeront. —— Je vous prie d'annoncer cette decouverte a vos illuſtres Academiciens; elle merite bien, qu'ils la ſçachent des premiers. Je ſuis ravi que la fortune ſe ſoit ſervié de moi, pour rendre a la poſterite un ouvrage ſi precieux," &c. If the loſt Decades of Livy had been recovered, this zealous Frenchman could hardly have expreſſed himſelf with more enthuſiaſm. What then will the reader think when he is told, that this wonderful acceſſion to literature, was no other than Petronius Arbiter; an author, whom it is impoſſible to read without intenſe diſguſt, and whom, if he be ancient, (which is not certain), I ſcruple not to call a diſgrace to antiquity?

for

for that reaſon to throw off all concern about human things? Muſt we ſet our harveſts on fire, or leave them to periſh, becauſe a few tares have ſprung up with the corn? Becauſe oppreſſion will ſometimes take place where-ever there is ſubordination, and luxury where-ever there is ſecurity, are we therefore to renounce all government? — or ſhall we, according to the advice of certain famous projectors, run naked to the woods, and there encounter every hardſhip and brutality of ſavage life, in order to eſcape from the tooth-ach and rheumatiſm? If we reject every uſeful inſtitution that may poſſibly be attended with inconvenience, we muſt reject all bodily exerciſe, and all bodily reſt, all arts and ſciences, all law, commerce, and ſociety.

If the preſent objection prove any thing deciſive againſt ancient literature, it will prove a great deal more againſt the modern. Of claſſical indecency compared with that of latter times, I do not think ſo favourably as did a certain critic, who likened the former to the nakedneſs of a child, and the latter to that of a proſtitute; I think there is too much of the laſt character in both: but that the modern muſes partake of it more than the ancient, is undeniable. I do not care to prove what I ſay, by a detail of particulars; and am ſorry to add, that the point is too plain to require proof. And if ſo, may not an early acquaintance with the beſt

ancient authors, as teachers of wiſdom, and models of good taſte, be highly uſeful as a preſervative from the ſophiſtries and immoralities that diſgrace ſome of our faſhionable moderns? If a true taſte for Claſſic learning ſhall ever become general, the demand for licentious plays, poems, and novels, will abate in proportion; for it is to the more illiterate readers that this ſort of traſh is moſt acceptable. Study, ſo ignominious and ſo debaſing, ſo unworthy of a ſcholar and of a man, ſo repugnant to good taſte and good manners, will hardly engage the attention of thoſe who can reliſh the original magnificence of Homer and Virgil, Demoſthenes and Cicero.

A book is of ſome value, if it yield harmleſs amuſement; it is ſtill more valuable, if it communicate inſtruction; but if it anſwer both purpoſes, it is truly a matter of importance to mankind. That many of the claſſic authors poſſeſſed the art of blending ſweetneſs with utility, has been the opinion of all men without exception, who had ſenſe and learning ſufficient to qualify them to be judges. — Is hiſtory inſtructive and entertaining? We have from theſe authors a detail of the moſt important events unfolded in the moſt intereſting manner. Without the hiſtories they have left us, we ſhould have been both ignorant of their affairs, and unſkilled in the art of recording our own: for I think it is allowed, that the beſt modern

dern hiſtories are thoſe which in form are moſt ſimilar to the ancient models. — Is philoſophy a ſource of improvement and delight? The Greeks and Romans have given us, I ſhall not ſay the moſt uſeful, but I will ſay the fundamental, part of human ſcience; have led us into a train of thinking, which of ourſelves we ſhould not ſo ſoon have taken to; and have ſet before us an endleſs multitude of examples and inferences, which, though not exempt from error, do however ſuggeſt the proper methods of obſervation and profitable inquiry. Let thoſe, who undervalue the diſcoveries of antiquity, only think, what our condition at this day muſt have been, if, in the ages of darkneſs that followed the deſtruction of the Roman empire, all the literary monuments of Greece and Italy had periſhed. — Again, is there any thing productive of utility and pleaſure, in the fictions of poetry, and in the charms of harmonious compoſition? Surely, it cannot be doubted; nor will they, who have any knowledge of the hiſtory of learning, heſitate to affirm, that the modern Europeans are almoſt wholly indebted for the beauty of their writings both in proſe and verſe, to thoſe models of elegance that firſt appeared in Greece, and have ſince been admired and imitated all over the weſtern world. It is a ſtriking fact, that while in other parts of the earth there prevails a form of language, ſo diſguiſed by figures, and ſo darkened by incoherence,

incoherence, as to be quite unſuitable to philoſophy, and even in poetry tireſome, the Europeans ſhould have been ſo long in poſſeſſion of a ſtyle, in which harmony, perſpicuity, ſimplicity, and elegance, are ſo happily united. That the Romans and modern Europeans had it from the Greeks, is well known; but whence thoſe fathers of literature derived it, is not ſo apparent, and would furniſh matter for too long a digreſſion, if we were here to inquire. — In a word, the Greeks and Romans are our maſters in all polite literature; a conſideration, which of itſelf ought to inſpire reverence for their writings and genius.

Good tranſlations are very uſeful; but the beſt of them will not render the ſtudy of the original authors either unneceſſary or unprofitable. This might be proved by many arguments.

All living languages are liable to change. The Greek and Latin, though compoſed of more durable materials than ours, were ſubject to perpetual viciſſitude, till they ceaſed to be ſpoken. The former is with reaſon believed to have been more ſtationary than any other; and indeed a very particular attention was paid to the preſervation of it: yet between Spenſer and Pope, Hooker and Sherlock, Raleigh and Smollet, a difference of dialect is not more perceptible, than between Homer and Apollonius, Xenophon and Plutarch, Ariſtotle and Antoninus. In the

the Roman authors the change of language is ſtill more remarkable. How different, in this reſpect, is Ennius from Virgil, Lucilius from Horace, Cato from Columella, and even Catullus from Ovid! The laws of the Twelve Tables, though ſtudied by every Roman of condition, were not perfectly underſtood even by antiquarians, in the time of Cicero, when they were not quite four hundred years old. Cicero himſelf, as well as Lucretius, made ſeveral improvements in the Latin tongue; Virgil introduced ſome new words; and Horace aſſerts his right to the ſame privilege; and from his remarks upon it *, appears to have conſidered the immutability of living language as an impoſſible thing. It were vain then to flatter ourſelves with the hope of permanency to any of the modern tongues of Europe; which, being more ungrammatical than the Latin and Greek, are expoſed to more dangerous, becauſe leſs diſcernible innovations. Our want of tenſes and caſes makes a multitude of auxiliary words neceſſary; and to theſe the unlearned are not attentive, becauſe they look upon them as the leaſt important parts of language; and hence they come to be omitted or miſapplied in converſation, and afterwards in writing. Beſides, the ſpirit of commerce, manufacture, and naval enterpriſe, ſo honourable to modern Europe, and to Great

* Hor. Ar. Poet. verſ. 46.—72.

Britain

Britain in particular, and the free circulation of arts, ſciences, and opinions, owing in part to the uſe of printing, and to our improvements in navigation, cannot fail to render the modern tongues, and eſpecially the Engliſh, more variable than the Greek or Latin. Much indeed has been done of late to aſcertain and fix the Engliſh tongue. Johnſon's Dictionary is a moſt important, and, conſidered as the work of one man, a moſt wonderful performance. It does honour to England, and to human genius; and proves, that there is ſtill left among us a force of mind equal to that which formerly diſtinguiſhed a Stephanus or a Varro. Its influence in diffuſing the knowledge of the language, and retarding its decline, is already obſervable:

Si Pergama dextra
Defendi poſſent, etiam hac defenſa fuiſſent.

And yet, within the laſt twenty years, and ſince this great work was publiſhed, a multitude of new words have found their way into the Engliſh tongue, and, though both unauthoriſed and unneceſſary, ſeem likely to remain in it.

In this fluctuating ſtate of the modern languages, and of our own in particular, what could we expect from tranſlations, if the ſtudy of Greek and Latin were to be diſcontinued? Suppoſe all the good books of

antiquity tranſlated into Engliſh, and the originals deſtroyed, or, which is nearly the ſame thing, neglected. That Engliſh grows obſolete in one century; and, in two, that tranſlation muſt be retranſlated. If there were faults in the firſt, and I never heard of a faultleſs tranſlation, they muſt be multiplied tenfold in the ſecond. So that, within a few centuries, there is reaſon to fear, that all the old authors would be either loſt, or ſo mangled as to be hardly worth preſerving. — A ſyſtem of Geometry, one would think, muſt loſe leſs in a tolerable tranſlation, than any other ſcience. Political ideas are ſomewhat variable; moral notions are ambiguous in their names at leaſt, if not in themſelves; the abſtruſer ſciences ſpeak a language ſtill more indefinite: but ideas of number and quantity muſt for ever remain diſtinct. And yet ſome late authors have thrown light upon Geometry, by reviving the ſtudy of the Greek geometricians. Let any man read a tranſlation of Cicero and Livy, and then ſtudy the author in his own tongue; and he ſhall find himſelf not only more delighted with the manner, but alſo more fully inſtructed in the matter.

Beauty of ſtyle, and harmony of verſe, would decay at the firſt tranſlation, and at the ſecond or third be quite loſt. It is not poſſible for one who is ignorant of Latin to have any adequate notion of Virgil; the choice of his words, and the modulation of

his numbers, have never been copied with tolerable fuccefs in any other tongue. Homer has been of all poets the moft fortunate in a tranflator; his fable, defcriptions, and pathos, and, for the moft part, his characters, we find in Pope: but we find not his fimplicity, nor his impetuofity, nor that majeftic inattention to the more trivial niceties of ftyle, which is fo graceful in him, but which no other poet dares imitate. Homer in Greek feems to fing extempore, and from immediate infpiration, or enthufiafm *; but in Englifh his phrafeology and numbers are not a little elaborate: which I mention, not with any view to detract from the tranflator, who truly deferves the higheft praife, but to fhew the infufficiency of modern language to convey a juft idea of ancient writing. — I need not enlarge on this fubject: it is well known, that few of the great authors of antiquity have ever been adequately tranflated. No man who underftands Plato, Demofthenes, or Xenophon, in the Greek, or Livy, Cicero, and Virgil, in the Latin, would willingly perufe even the beft tranflations of thofe authors.

* "His poems (fays a very learned writer) were made "to be recited, or fung to a company; and not read in "private, or perufed in a book, which few were then "capable of doing: and I will venture to affirm, that "whoever reads not Homer in this view, lofes a great "part of the delight he might receive from the poet." *Blackwell's Inquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer*, p. 122.

If

If one mode of compoſition be better than another, which will ſcarce be denied, it is ſurely worth while to preſerve a ſtandard of that which is beſt. This cannot be done, but by preſerving the original authors; and they cannot be ſaid to be preſerved, unleſs they be ſtudied and underſtood. Tranſlations are like portraits. They may give ſome idea of the lineaments and colour, but the life and the motion they cannot copy; and too often, inſtead of exhibiting the air of the original, they preſent us with that only which is moſt agreeable to the taſte of the painter. Aboliſh the originals, and you will ſoon ſee the copies degenerate.

There are in England two excellent ſtyles of poetical compoſition. Milton is our model in the one; Dryden and Pope in the other. Milton formed himſelf on the ancients, and on the modern Italians who imitate their anceſtors of old Rome. Dryden and Pope took the French poets for their pattern, particularly Boileau, who followed the ancients (of whom he was a paſſionate admirer) as far as the proſaic genius of the French tongue would permit. If we reject the old authors, and take theſe great moderns for our ſtandard, we do nothing more than copy after a copy. If we reject both, and ſet about framing new modes of compoſition, our ſucceſs will probably be no better, than that of the projectors whom Gulliver viſited in the metropolis of Balnibarbi.

THE END.

Cleaned & Oiled

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